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>> CENA'S COMPLAINTS!

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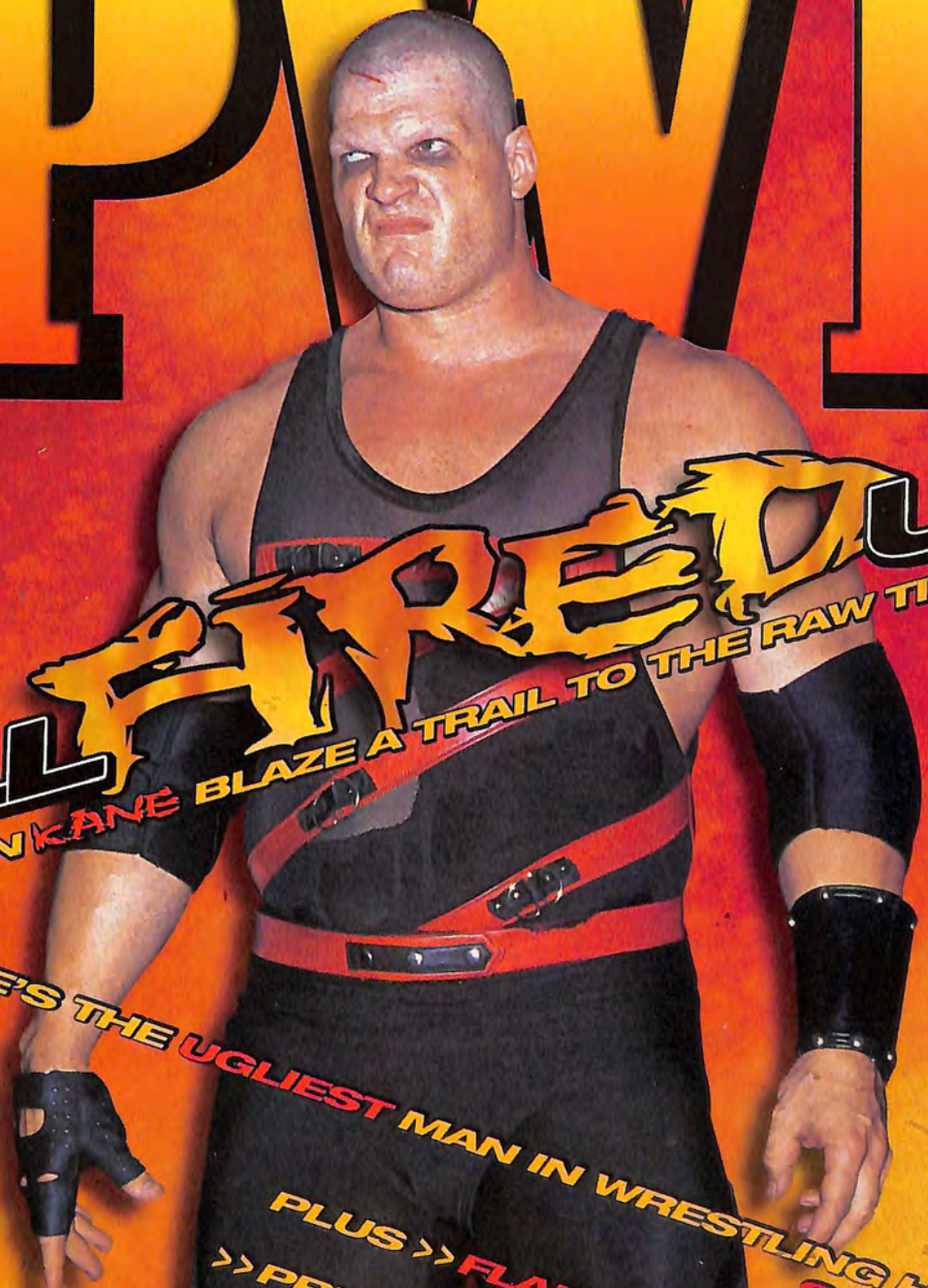

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SMUW11

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from the desk of...

HARLEY RACE ISN'T sure if the students at the Harley Race Wrestling Academy really know who he is. The last time he held the NWA World title, after all, some of them were in diapers.

"They all know that I was World champion eight times," Race told me recently. "They also know that in those days, there were a lot of major federations, and that the NWA was king of the hill. Most of them don't know my full story until they are here a while. The longer they stay, the more they'll find out."

Race chuckled. He knows it takes someone very special to be around the academy long enough to get the whole story. But like most teachers, he's not in this for a quick buck. He wants the Harley Race Academy to build a reputation for turning raw material into material for *Raw*.

Persistence and patience are what Race stresses to the students at his facility in Eldon, Missouri. "There's no magic formula for success in anything," he said. "Achievement is a marathon. You know how far you have to go and you keep running until you get there. It's great to win, but it says just as much about your character just to finish."

Race knows all about persistence and patience. He was in the game almost 14 years before he beat Dory Funk Jr. for NWA gold in 1973. He lost the belt to Jack Brisco less than two months later and didn't get it back until 1977, when he beat Dory's kid brother, Terry. He would go on to shatter Lou Thesz' long-standing mark of six NWA title reigns and be inducted into the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame in 1996.

When the Hall of Fame results for 2003 were announced *(see page 82)*, for some reason Race kept popping up in my mind. I went back to his photo files and didn't like what I saw. Way too many pictures in way too few folders. So I spent a day cleaning and sorting. By the time I had broken his career down, I learned that of the 85 opponents we have pictures of Race wrestling, 25 now have a place in the Hall of Fame. Basically, for every 10 opponents Race wrestled, three were legends. To me that is an even more significant statistic than his eight NWA World titles.

"It was all different back then," said Race, who admitted to also being a little surprised by my discovery. "The champion didn't sit around waiting for challengers to come to him. He traveled the world, taking on the champion in each regional territory. Not only were these wrestlers the best out there, they had the home field advantage and usually knew a heck of a lot more about me than I did about them."

Of course, there were a few wrestlers on Race's dance card with whom he was very familiar—Ric Flair, Dusty Rhodes, Dick Murdoch, Tommy Rich, and David Von Erich for example. "Classic feuds," laughed Race. "Great memories of some of the worst times of my life."

Race doesn't afford himself the luxury of spending a lot of time reminiscing. There's too much still left for him to do. Not only does he run the Academy, but his World League Wrestling is one of the most active independents in the country. "You can't get too far driving with your eyes on the rear view mirror," he said. "At this point in my life, the Race Academy and WLW are more important to me than beating Ric Flair for the title 20 years ago."

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Publisher

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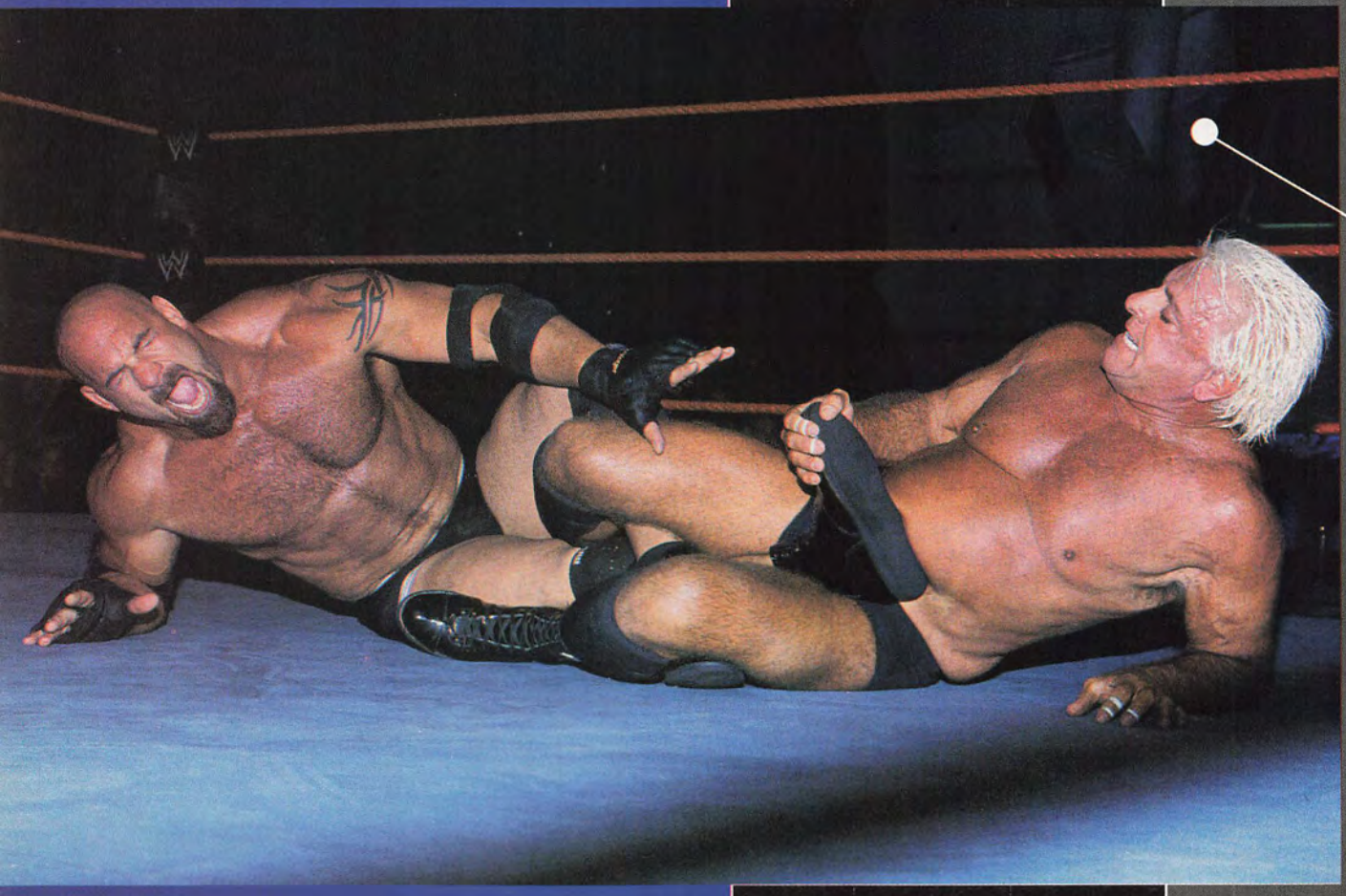

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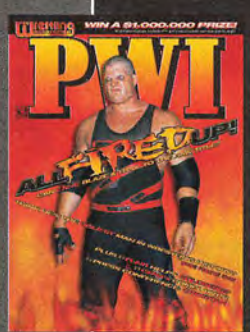

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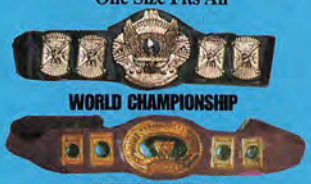

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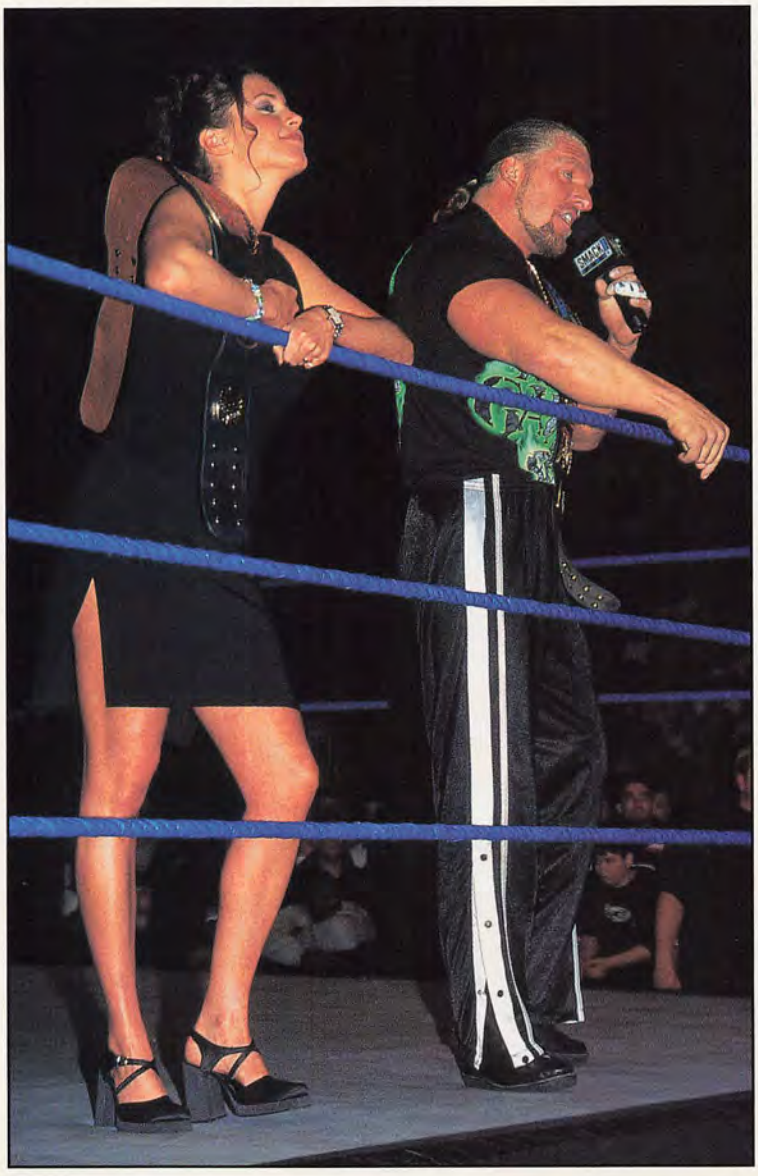
Compiled by Will Welsh

Gifts From The Heart

As some of you know, Triple-H and Stephanie McMahon were due to get married in October. So unless one of them backed out at the last minute (unlikely), they should be hitched by the time you read this. As with most happy couples getting ready to wed, we're pretty sure they registered for gifts. We think we even found one of their online registries with a popular upscale retailer. Now, we can't guarantee that the registry we found is actually one of theirs—it could very well be a prank put online by any number of fans looking to get one over on us reporter types—but even if it isn't their actual registry, it still makes for an entertaining story. Want proof? Here are just a few items from the registry:

•Nonstick muffin pan: $26
•OXO salad spinner: $25
•Excaliber nonstick wok with lid: $59
•Grill tools, set of five: $75
•Stainless steel 10-inch potato masher: $12.50



Okay, maybe that isn't proof. If you ask us, when the most exciting thing on your registry list is a stainless steel potato masher, you either like potatoes a little too much, or you've done a poor job registering. So being the helpful people that we are, we decided to find some other items that the McMahon-Helmsleys might need as they depart on their new life together. Here are just a few of our gift ideas:

•Plumb eight-pound sledgehammer, with a 32-inch hickory wood handle from the Home Depot. Perfect for use as a cheap, non-technical home security system. Price: $24.95.

•A set of 10 $10 gift certificates from Regal Cinemas (total, $100). Perfect for providing the happy couple with a quiet night of entertainment—or for when they're feeling a little lonely and want to go visit their good friend The Rock.

•A brand new puppy, which can range from almost free (see your local ASPCA) to incredibly expensive. We're sure that the McMahon-Helmsleys would take this gift to heart, especially after considering that Chris Jericho mistakenly ran over Steph's dog, Lucy, last year.

•A life-size cardboard cut out of "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, which can be bought on the cheap if you're lucky enough to find one on eBay. Not only would this piece add to the couple's already massive wrestling collectibles display, they could also sit it at the door if they wanted to keep Papa Vince out of the house while they enjoyed a romantic evening at home.

•And last but not least, a subscription to *PWI!* We're positive they'd appreciate that!

Talkin' Trash

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related things you've been talking about lately and our gut reaction to each.

10. Raw champion Triple-H does almost nothing in the six-way "Elimination Chamber" match but retains his title at SummerSlam. Somehow, this wasn't terribly shocking.

9. The Rock's newest movie, The Rundown, hits movie theaters. We have four words for The Rock when it comes to his pursuit of Hollywood greatness: Establish dominance! Establish dominance!

8. Shawn Michaels and Chris Benoit are the only two wrestlers to be voted into the Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame in 2003 balloting. Apparently our write-in votes for El Dandy and Big Bossman didn't put them over the top. *Darn!*

7. Mike Tyson signs a contract with K-1, opening up the possibility of a mixed martial arts fight against New Japan Pro Wrestling phenom Bob Sapp. And so begins *PWI's* coverage of MMA ... just kidding, folks.

6. Test wins back the managerial services of former girlfriend Stacy Keibler. We here at "BTB" imagine that Keibler's feeling pretty down right now, so in order to help her cheer up, we thought we'd give her some free publicity. Yeah, we're thoughtful like that.

5. Brock Lesnar bloodies Zach Gowen in a pre-SummerSlam attack, breaking his remaining leg in two different places. We hate to say it (okay, not really), but Lesnar left Gowen without a leg to stand on.

4. Hulk Hogan announces he is in talks with Clear Channel Communications regarding a possible farewell tour. Oh, boy! We can't wait for those main events of Hogan vs. Brutus Beefcake! Bring it on!

3. Chris Jericho beats Kevin Nash in a hair vs. hair match. We had a feeling that Nash would lose when he showed up for the match with blond—yes, blond—hair.

2. Jonathan Coachman turns heel. By everything that's good and holy, this worked! This really somehow worked! Don't look now, but the apocalypse has just begun.

1. Shane McMahon throws Kane into a dumpster engulfed in flames. Now this was simply ignorant. With gasoline prices so high, did WWE really have to waste all that gas in setting the dumpster ablaze? Couldn't the company have used some other flammable material?

The Internet Insider

The following news items were culled from various wrestling-related Web sites—or were they? See if you can pick out the *three* (yes, this time it's three) items that were actually reported on the Internet (which don't necessarily mean that they are true) and the *one* that we blatantly made up. The answer appears at the end of the column on page 11.

1. Former WCW mid-carder Maxx Payne (real name Darryl Peterson) has filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against a group of video game manufacturers for allegedly stealing his persona to create the game *Max Payne*. "I left wrestling to come home to Utah to be with my family, and I find myself in the biggest battle of my life—to save my identity," said the melodramatic Peterson in an Associated Press story. "They stole something from me that I'm not going to give up. I'll fight until there's no fight left."

2. There's a fake El Santo movie making the rounds entitled *Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter*. The story of the movie is that Christ returns to fight vampires, and when He has problems, He calls on Santo to help him—only this isn't the real Santo, but rather a fat guy wearing a Santo mask pretending to be the real Santo.

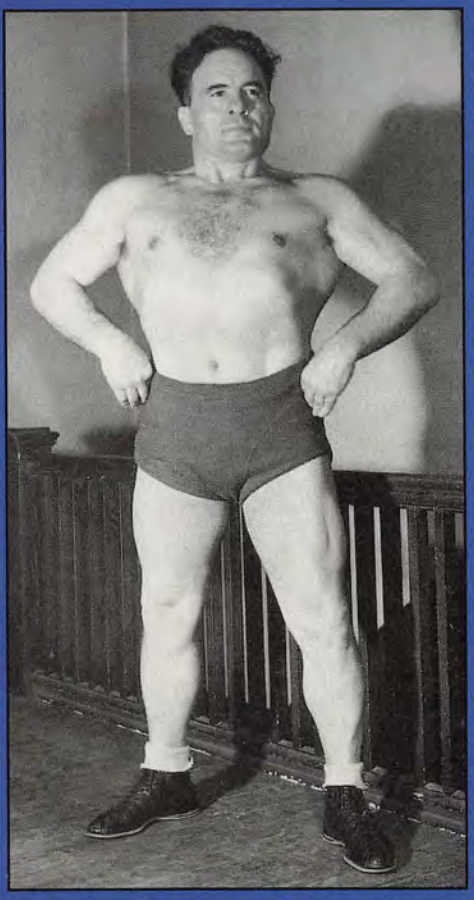
3. "Macho Man" Randy Savage will soon be releasing a yet-unnamed rap CD. The CD will feature raps such as "Be A Man"—a challenge to Hulk Hogan—as well as other raps such as "RU Ready," "It's A Macho Thang," and the in-your-face song "Remember Me." A source close to Savage's camp said, "'Macho Man' paved a path in the wading pool of wrestling, now it's time for him to make bigger waves in the musical pool. And I just feel sorry for anyone that gets caught in the undertow."

4. A number of wrestlers and former wrestlers are making the rounds to various TV executives to pitch a wrestling-based reality show. The Ultimate Warrior, Randy "Macho Man" Savage, Joanie "Chyna" Laurer, Bam Bam Bigelow, The Blue Meanie, Dusty Rhodes, The Honky Tonk Man, Jake "The Snake" Roberts, Buff Bagwell, Mike Rotundo, and Missy Hyatt are all said to be involved with the project. Details of the intended show are as of yet unknown, but sources close to the talks say that the basic premise is similar to that of *Survivor*.

This Month in Wrestling History

January

January 19, 1880: William Muldoon defeats Thebaud Bauer at Gilmore's Gardens (later site of Madison Square Garden) in a best-of-three-falls match to emerge with the Greco-Roman championship. The bout draws more than 3,000 fans. (This why Vince McMahon is so in love with Madison Square Garden—because he's a traditionalist.)



January 2, 1897: Jim Londos (pictured) is born Chris Theophelos in Argos, Greece. Londos is the son of a Greek amateur champion. (Though this has never been publicly acknowledged, Londos' father was actually the Greek god Zeus, who prided himself on his stellar wrestling ability. So, considering that he was like the thunder god and all, why wouldn't he have been able to hold the Greek amateur championship?)

January 27, 1904: Frank Gotch beats Tom Jenkins in Bellingham, Washington, to win the American heavyweight championship for the first time. Gotch takes the first fall by pinfall, while Jenkins is disqualified in the second fall for fouling Gotch. (This was obviously long before the era of ECW, which threw disqualifications for "fouling" out the window.)

January 27, 1916: Joe Stecher retains the World title by beating The Masked Marvel in two straight falls at Madison Square Garden. The Marvel is revealed to be Mort Henderson. (On the undercard, Ed "Strangler" Lewis beat The Batman in two of three falls. The Batman was later revealed to be reclusive Gotham City billionaire Bruce Wayne.)

January 2, 1934: The New York State Athletic Commission investigates "secret agreements" and "title juggling" in wrestling, calling Rudy Miller, Jack Curley, Jim Londos, Toots Mondt, Ed White, Tom Packs, and Dick Shikat to a January 9 hearing. At the January 9 hearing, the commission says, in a prepared statement, "We have heard all the testimony. We have sent it out to be translated into English. When that is done, we will consider it." (So begins the precedent of fine judiciary rulings in the sport of professional wrestling!)

We Heard That!

"The critics, I've got to tell you—I wouldn't care if you believed in Jesus Christ and we brought Him back as a guest appearance, we would be criticized for doing that by that audience. They're so negative. They're so … negative about what we do. I won't read it. I won't let our writers read it. I don't listen to critics. I listen to our audience."

—Vince McMahon, in an interview with the *Rocky Mountain News*

"A lot of people will e-mail me and say, 'I wish you were in an X division match.' F___ that. I don't want to be in an X division match. Look what they did with Ace [Steel], completely lost him in the shuffle. And there are a lot of X division guys who are 10 times better than me. I would rather be working with everybody else. They put me in a storyline, and that's the

greatest feeling in the world. Instead of those matches where there are 14 guys in a match and you just go out and have a car wreck, I was in a storyline."

—C.M. Punk, making friends with NWA-TNA X division wrestlers, in an interview with www.chicagowrestling.com

"Shares of the pro wrestler marketer (WWE) tumbled 37 percent to $9.08. But Chairman Vince McMahon's salary rose 8.5 percent to $1.1-million, and he received $850,000 for 'talent fees' that the company says include personal appearances and developing plot lines for shows."

—*USA Today* writer Gary Strauss, in a story about chief executive officers who continue to pad their wallets despite relatively poor performances by their companies

"WWE being a public company is so helpful to so many of us wrestling journalists. When they went public and had to air all their laundry, it gave all of us with any aspirations of performing on the business side a great blueprint of where to go and where not to go."

—Major League Wrestling announcer Joey Styles, confusing us as to whether he's an announcer, a businessman, or a wrestling journalist, in an interview with wrestlingobserver.com

"There's a history of Looney Tunes and insanity in our family."

—Raven, in an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

September's Best

"Okay, Sabu, this is the last game of rock, paper, scissors. The loser has to wrestle Justin Credible."

—Stacy Bentz, stacybentz@shaw.ca

"Remember, I am 'The Whole F'n Show! Also, you have a boogie hanging ..."

—Nolan Lindstrom, Inwood, WV

"Dude, I'm not letting you go until you tell me *who* you keep pointing to out there!"

—Rmbell16@aol.com

"Hey, did you spit in your hand again, Sabu?"

—Joshua Picazo, stormwwe@yahoo.com

"Then it's settled. You stop calling me Rob Gosh Darn, and I'll stop calling you Sable."

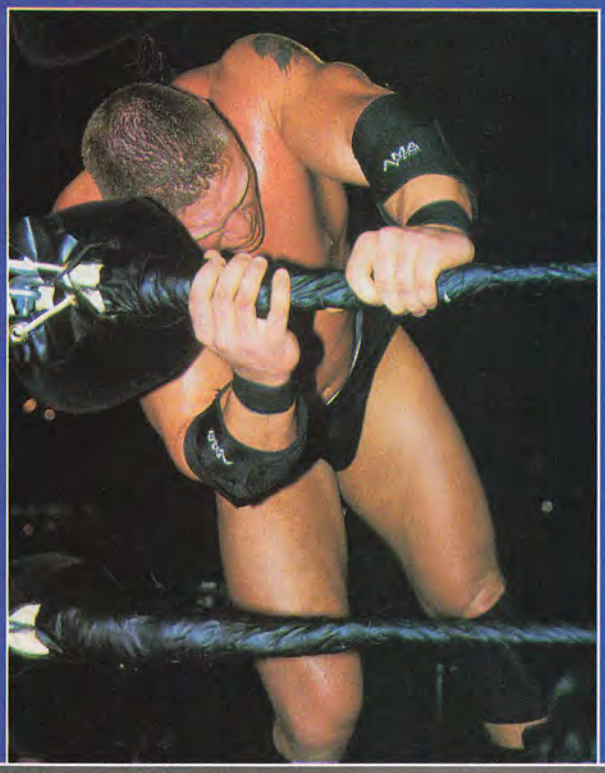
—Michael Donato, Bohemia, NY

"Dude, you're uglier than Kane! Need a good mask?"

—Pamela Taylor, pamelalovesjon@msn.com

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This photo of a dazed, downtrodden, or perhaps confused Brock Lesnar needs a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelope and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.



Answers to Internet Insider:

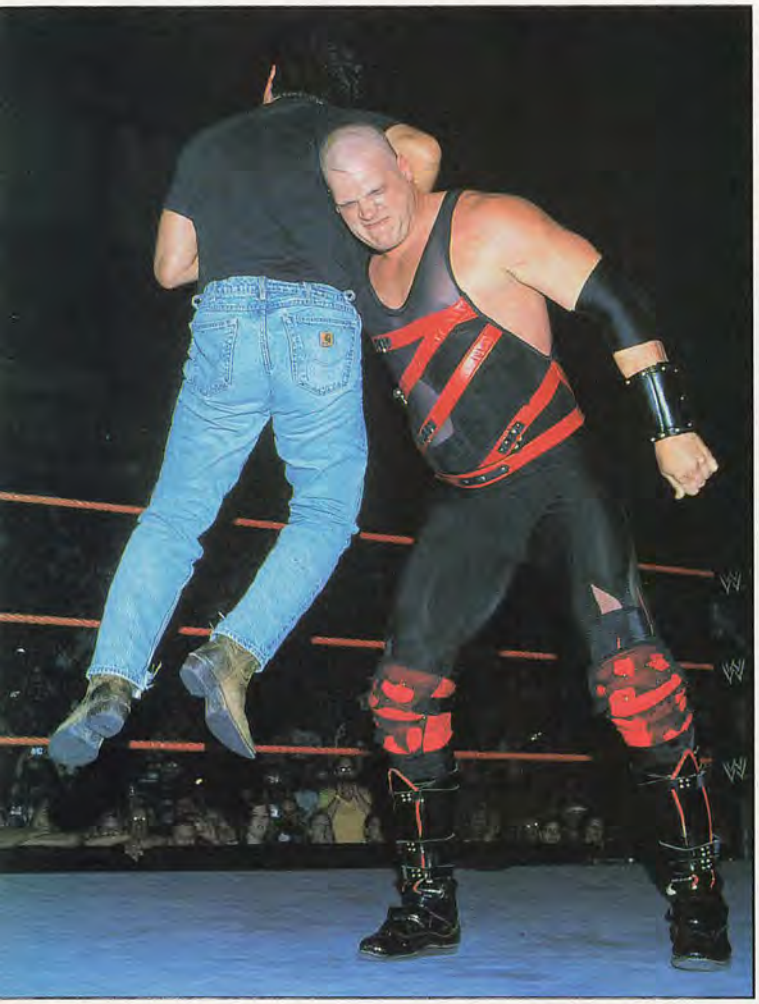
Item 4 is totally made up.

ringside

With Will Welsh

AS ANY PARENT knows, it's next to impossible to keep children from becoming who they are destined to become, no matter how scary, fearsome, or awe-inspiring they may turn out to be. Children eventually establish their own identity—one that's connected to, yet entirely distinct from that of their parents and other siblings. It's the natural progression of life, and it cannot be stopped. It's nature's way.

Right now, WWE executives understand this very well, because their most beloved children, Raw and Smackdown, are starting to develop identities and personalities that are worlds apart from each other. Raw is the louder, more boisterous of the two children. Smackdown has a personality that's more quiet and reserved. Rarely does it let anything that's too outrageous penetrate its outer shell.



Although WWE is still facing a lot of problems, both creative and financial, one thing it has done in recent months is make Raw and Smackdown two very distinct brands. If you want outrageous storylines, you know you need to check out Kane on a Raw show.

It's about time, because the brand extension was getting a little too formulaic for my taste. How so, you ask? Well, it's simple. On the Raw side, you had its two co-general managers, **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** and **Eric Bischoff**, duking it out for power. On the Smackdown side, GM **Stephanie McMahon** was squaring off with a nemesis of her own, her father (and WWE chairman), **Vince McMahon**. Every Monday, Austin battled Bischoff, and every Thursday, McMahon battled McMahon.

For a while there, it looked as if WWE's writers were booking the same storyline with minor changes in dialogue to accommodate the differing characters. And there were other similarities, too:

•Raw reintroduced the Intercontinental title … Smackdown, the U.S. title.

•On the Raw side, **Test** and **Scott Steiner** fought over **Stacy Keibler** in one of the brand's hottest mid-card feuds. On Smackdown, **Billy Gunn** and **Jamie Noble** wrestled over the lovely **Torrie Wilson** in one of that brand's hottest mid-card feuds.

•Smackdown featured the return of **"Rowdy" Roddy Piper's** "Piper's Pit." Raw countered with the debut of **Chris Jericho's** "Highlight Reel."

Not exactly a way to create distinct brand identities.

Fortunately, WWE has changed things up. Instead of patterning Raw and Smackdown after one another, it seems to be trying to let Raw and Smackdown play to their individual strengths. With its over-the-top characters and storylines, *Raw* is your more traditional WWE program—as it probably should be because of its important historical significance to the company. There's nothing quite like watching the ridiculousness of **Kane** getting tossed into a burning dumpster (and not getting burned), unathletic **Jonathan Coachman** squaring off with even more unathletic **Jim Ross**, **The Hurricane** naming **Rosey** a "Super Hero In Training," or Bischoff stalking **Linda McMahon** in her palatial Connecticut mansion as **Shane McMahon** jumps into a car at the site of *Raw* (in Michigan) and prepares to drive 700-plus miles to save her.

Smackdown, on the other hand, is the WWE brand in which storyline outrageousness has given way to technical excellence. It's the modern-day version of what ECW was aiming to become. Of course, it helps that Smackdown employs

Smackdown has become the WWE brand for the wrestling purist. There's nothing outrageous about the feud between Shelton Benjamin and Rey Misterio Jr. But they will offer you some fantastic athletic matches.

arguably WWE's top five in-ring talents (**Kurt Angle**, **Eddie Guerrero**, **Chris Benoit**, **Rey Misterio Jr.**, and **Brock Lesnar**, not to mention fantastic athletes such as **Matt Hardy**, **Shelton Benjamin**, **Charlie Haas**, **Tajiri**, and **Billy Kidman**) and features the ultra-athletic and competitive cruiserweight division.

Whether or not WWE will sustains this course is for Vince McMahon to decide, but here's a voice hoping that it does (though it wouldn't hurt if WWE toned down the outrageousness of Raw just a bit).

NWA-TNA is another company that has hit its stride in recent months. Just like WWE since the brand extension, TNA has had trouble with its identity. One week the promotion would feature five-star matches, only to follow it up with haphazardly booked segments, backstage skits, and matches a week later. This inconsistent structure had a lot of fans wondering whether or not the following week's show was truly going to be worth the $9.95 price tag; critics were curious as to whether or not the crazy carousel known as TNA would ever settle into a comfortable pace.

While I'm not sure I'd call TNA's pace comfortable (as of late, the matches have been far too good to be simply labeled as something so mundane as "comfortable"), the promotion has settled into something that resembles reliable. The **Chris Daniels** and **Elix Skipper** vs. **America's Most Wanted** (June 25), **A.J. Styles** vs. **Low-Ki** (August 13), Ultimate X (August 20), and A.J. Styles vs. **Raven** (August 27) matches were all Match of the Year-caliber, and the "Wednesday Bloody Wednesday" match from September 3, which was a spinoff of the old "War Games" matches of WCW fame, was better than anything WWE has produced in the twice-used "Elimination Chamber."

Of course, in order for TNA to gain some solid footing, it must prove that it can deliver more than a few critically acclaimed shows in a row. As long as the promotion remembers that its strengths reside in its core of somewhat unknown but extremely talented wrestlers, that shouldn't be a problem.

According to the results of an autopsy and toxicology tests performed by the Cobb County (Georgia) Medical Examiner, a combination of drugs and alcohol caused the May 1 death of **Elizabeth Hulette**, 42, who was better known to wrestling fans as **Miss Elizabeth**. Tests revealed that at the time of her death, Hulette's blood alcohol level was 0.29 (more than three times the legal driving limit in Georgia), and she had a mix of painkillers, nausea medication, and tranquilizers running through her body. The official cause of death was given as acute toxicity, as foul play and suicide were ruled out.

In other disturbing news, the relationship between **Joanie Laurer** (the former **Chyna**) and **Sean Waltman** (the former **X-Pac**) has come to an ugly head. The syndicated television show *Celebrity Justice* disclosed this summer that the couple's engagement was off and that Laurer had a restraining order against Waltman. *Celebrity Justice* showed court documents stating that Laurer accused Waltman of physical abuse, and various reports had the former WWE diva in hiding at the time the *Celebrity Justice* segment aired.

For his part, Waltman doesn't dispute that the couple has had their troubles, but in a long, rambling online statement, he claimed that any actions he took were made in self-defense, and that he still loved Laurer. "I only used holds to restrain her from hurting me," wrote Waltman.

It seems the Jerry Jarrett approach to wrestling has won out over the Vince Russo approach in NWA-TNA. The promotion has been on quite a roll of late, and it's because it's offering splendid matches, like this one involving Chris Daniels and Chris Harris.

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6393/08-03

Let's hope these two people can get their lives together—with or without each other.

In an effort to create greater interest in house shows and boost attendance, WWE officials have begun regularly booking non-wrestling personnel (such as Vince McMahon, Stephanie McMahon, "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, Shane McMahon, and Eric Bischoff) on the shows to spice things up. While most of the appearances have gone well, a strange thing happened during the August 31 Smackdown show in Uniondale, New York. During a match between **Rhyno** and Tajiri, Vince McMahon stormed the ringside area, called the match boring, and then called for its immediate end. Then he ordered the start of a bikini contest between **Sable**, Torrie Wilson, **Dawn Marie**, and **Nidia**.

Some WWE officials in the backstage area thought that McMahon's actions were meant as a harmless prank, while others were offended that he would upstage and embarrass two of his wrestlers in the midst of a match. Whatever the case, WWE officials do at times seem reluctant to allow their wrestlers to work slower, more methodical—and safer—matches. That's strange because it's exactly what they asked the wrestlers to do earlier this year in order to help re-educate the fans and make them less demanding of high-risk spots.

NWA-TNA diva **Kim Neilson** (a.k.a. **Desire**), who suffered a fractured tailbone and a broken L1 in her lower back earlier this year, is doing well and has started to work out in the ring once again. She is one tough woman, people ... **The Rock** continues to get pitched movie roles. The latest rumor has him as the top candidate for the lead in *Predator 3* ... Speaking of movie roles, look for **Kevin Nash** next year in *The Punisher*, which should be the next film to emerge from the Marvel family of comic books.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □

It's been a few months since we have seen Sean Waltman in the ring in TNA, but he is making news outside the ring. It concerns Joanie Laurer, and it's not good.

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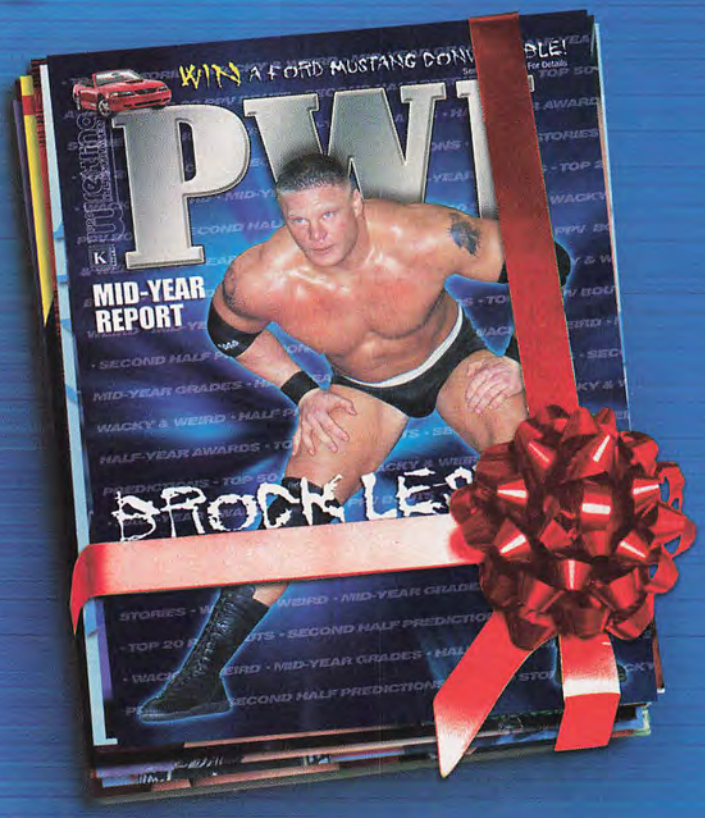

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6391/07-03

in focus

By Dave Lenker

HELP US HELP YOU!

If you're a long-time reader of *PWI,* you know we've made a lot of changes to the format of the magazine in the last several years. We've increased the total page count, gone all-color, developed special theme issues, and added new departments and features. Since you have now had more than enough time to digest all the changes, we want to know how you feel about them. In fact, we want to know how you feel about the entire magazine. And we'd like a little more information about you as well.

That's right, folks, it's time for a good ol'-fashioned (and highly unscientific) reader survey. This is your chance to tell us what you do and don't like about the stuff you see in *PWI*—and exactly how much you like and dislike all that stuff you see in *PWI.* What I'm asking you to do is, using the form on the opposite page, rate each department/column in the magazine on a scale of 1 (strongly dislike or don't care to read/see) to 5 (like a lot and always look forward to reading/seeing). Circle the number that you think each deserves.

Now I'm *not* asking you to rate just this issue's version of the department/column—unless you are a first-time reader of *PWI*—but rather what you think of it in general and whether you look forwarding to reading it regularly. I also have some general questions for you toward the end of the survey. All I ask is that you take a few minutes to give this some thought, fill out the survey, and send it to the address below as soon as you can. Feel free to include additional comments on a separate sheet of paper. Keep in mind that by participating, you will be helping to make sure that *PWI* is the kind of magazine *you* want to read. Your answers and comments will not be printed in the magazine. If you'd like these questions e-mailed to you, please send a request (with PWI POLL in the subject field) to londonpub@kappapublishing.com.

We think we know which WWE brand these fans prefer. But what about you? That's just one of many questions we'd like you to take the time to answer for us in this reader survey.

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING COLUMNS/DEPARTMENTS ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5

(1 being the worst score possible, and 5 being the best):

From The Desk Of (Stu Saks) 1 2 3 4 5
Before The Bell (Will Welsh) 1 2 3 4 5
Ringside (Will Welsh) 1 2 3 4 5
In Focus (Dave Lenker) 1 2 3 4 5
Off The Top Rope (Brandi Mankiewicz) 1 2 3 4 5
Krew-Cuts (Frank Krewda) 1 2 3 4 5
Press Conference 1 2 3 4 5
Business Page (Harry Burkett) 1 2 3 4 5
The Steel Cage (Liz Hunter) 1 2 3 4 5
Win, Lose, Or Draw (Harry Burkett) 1 2 3 4 5
The Wrestling Analyst 1 2 3 4 5
Superstars & Superbouts 1 2 3 4 5
The Ultimate Wrestler 1 2 3 4 5
12 Questions 1 2 3 4 5
Fantastic Finishers 1 2 3 4 5
Through The Years 1 2 3 4 5
***Wrestling Observer* Hall Of Fame** 1 2 3 4 5
Independent Roundup (Liz Hunter) 1 2 3 4 5
International Report (Mike Spillane) 1 2 3 4 5
Arena Reports 1 2 3 4 5
***PWI* Classic** 1 2 3 4 5
Between Falls 1 2 3 4 5
Ratings 1 2 3 4 5
Ratings Analysis 1 2 3 4 5
Drawing Blood (Jason Conlan) 1 2 3 4 5
WOW! Check Out This Shot! 1 2 3 4 5

IF YOU HAVE READ THEM IN THE PAST, PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING REGULAR THEME ISSUES OF *PWI* OR *PWI PRESENTS* ON THE SAME SCALE AS ABOVE:

State Of The Game (February) 1 2 3 4 5
Year In Review (April) 1 2 3 4 5
***PWI* Poll** (June) 1 2 3 4 5
Mid-Year Report (October) 1 2 3 4 5
PWI 500 (*PWI Presents*, Fall) 1 2 3 4 5
Wrestling Annual (*PWI Presents*, Spring) 1 2 3 4 5

What do you like most about *PWI?* _____

_____

_____

What would you most like to change about *PWI?* _____

_____

_____

Which WWE brand do you prefer? Raw ☐ Smackdown ☐ No strong preference ☐

Who is the most underrated WWE wrestler? _____

Who is the most overrated WWE wrestler? _____

Who is the best wrestler not in WWE? _____

In general, how do you feel about the inclusion of members of the McMahon family in WWE storylines?

They get too much TV time on *Raw* and *Smackdown* ☐ They're involved just enough ☐
I'd like to see *more* of the McMahons on WWE TV ☐

How many WWE pay-per-views have you ordered in the last year?

0 ☐ 1 to 3 ☐ 4 to 6 ☐ More than 6 ☐

How many NWA-TNA pay-per-views have you ordered in the last year?

0 ☐ 1 to 5 ☐ 6 to 10 ☐ 10 to 20 ☐ More than 20 ☐

Would you like to see more, less, or about the same amount of coverage of NWA-TNA in *PWI?*

More ☐ Less ☐ About the same ☐

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off the top rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:
TOP ROPE Box 1148 Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or send e-mail to: **offthetoprope@yahoo.com**

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

WHEN DID WRESTLING stop being fun? My guess is that it began somewhere around the time the promoters all started giving fans exactly what they wanted. Armchair bookers across the world would log on to their computers with the hope that they could change something. Promoters, being the egotistical freaks that they are, all started using what they saw on the Internet as their next big angles and then backed up to the "smart fans" for their Tuesday morning fanny smooch. While this mutual hiney-sniffing serves to feed egos, it has killed two major promotions and quite possibly the viability of wrestling as we know it.

Just once, I would love to meet a fan who isn't trying to run his own promotion, isn't aiming to become a wrestler, and doesn't introduce himself as an "aspiring wrestling journalist." Doesn't anyone watch wrestling just to be entertained anymore? For those of you who watch religiously every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday night, I am your champion.

To Brandi Mankiewicz:

I am an avid viewer of *Smackdown* on Thursday nights, and I was highly upset by the recent events involving Stephanie and her dad. This is the reason behind me e-mailing you today. I would like to know if Shane (Stephanie's brother and Mr. McMahon's son) is planning on joining up with Stephanie against their father, or if he is planning on joining up with Mr. McMahon against his daughter (I hope not). I would also like to know if Linda McMahon is planning on coming to Thursday nights in order to help either her husband or her daughter. If you have any information available on these subjects, please let me know. Thank you for your time.

NATHAN CLAIBORN
Natedogg72204@yahoo.com

To Nathan:

Shane McMahon (Stephanie's brother and Vince's son) is too busy getting his genitalia jump-started like a dead car battery thanks to Kane (The Undertaker's "half-brother" and Paul Bearer's "son") on *Raw*. Shane would rather defend his mother's honor on that show than be in the middle of the modified cockfight currently being pecked out by his sister and dad. Who knows, if Shane starts wrestling again on a modified Hogan schedule, he might just be the one to dethrone Triple-H (his soon-to-be brother-in-law) as champion.

Dear Brandi,

I enjoy your honesty and candid views about the wrestling world. I think WWE would benefit from having about 18 of you on staff. I have been to the last five shows that have graced Indianapolis, and the last one, by far, was the worst. The main event was Gail Kim and Molly Holly. And then I got to watch a giant TV of Kane setting J.R. ablaze. Wow. And to make the night well worth … nothing, there was no Goldberg, no HBK, no Van Dam, and Kane on a TV. I did get to see a predictable six-man tag between the Dudleys and Evolution. Oh baby! I honestly think that a show like this is an insult to fans such as myself who have been following the sport for a long time. And next time I know better than to pay Monday night prices on a house show wannabe. How do you feel the quality of today's shows are?

ERIC EVANS
depac33@yahoo.com

Wouldn't it be great if Shane McMahon—and maybe Linda as well—started appearing on *Smackdown*, too, and got involved in the Vince-Steph feud? No, it wouldn't. Both WWE brands should have a two McMahon limit (if that) on all shows.

Dear Eric,

Honestly, I can't see why you're bitching about the lack of live wrestling on a *Raw* broadcast show. You do watch the show every week, don't you? You should already know that they do very little in the ring and tons of backstage vignettes that are geared to the television audience, while forsaking the live audience. Did you think that just because *you* bought a ticket, WWE was going to scrap the usual formula and revive the old WCW Clash of the Champions series just for you? Hell no. There was nothing wrong with giving you Molly Holly vs. Gail Kim as the last live match. Both ladies are certainly talented enough to deserve to be in the main event. They bust their asses just as much—if not more—than the guys and rarely get any recognition for it. As one who has followed the sport for as long as you claim you have, you knew damn well what you'd be given. If you want good wrestling with no interruptions, go to a house show.

I don't care how many great matches Chris Benoit has wrestled and will wrestle from here on. He just doesn't have the charisma to "carry" WWE. Hell, even Rikishi has him beat in that category.

Dearest Almighty Queen Brandi,

Knowing that Bret Hart is one of your all-time favorite wrestlers, what is your opinion on Chris Benoit finally getting the chance to be champ? We are always hearing how Benoit's microphone skills are lacking, but look at Brock Lesnar's mike skills. Benoit is not the inexperienced champ that Lesnar is. Benoit is a man who could put the whole WWE on his back and carry the weight with no problem. I say give Benoit the chance he has proven over and over that he deserves. Bret Hart was one of the best the wrestling business ever had to offer. He showed he could do it, and I think Benoit will do the same. Your opinion on this?

RICH McDANIEL
rushman_21901@yahoo.com

Dearest Injudicious Lowlife,

Chris Benoit lacks an intangible facet: charisma. He has the personality of cardboard that keeps him from being a main-eventer for too long. If those in power at the Ent thought he had even a sliver of charisma to offset his enormous pile of technical ability, Benoit would have had the belt by now. Nothing against him, but he just lacks that extra *oomph* that's needed to draw in the crowds. All of the ability in the world can't make you a good world champion. Bob Backlund proved that one.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

AN 1 MORE THING U PSYCHO LUNATIC BITCH IN RESPONSE 2 DAT GUY CHAD AN HIS ASKING 4 A PICTURE OF GOLDYLOCKS I REMEMBER U SAID AN I QUOT NEVER LET IT B SAID THAT I DON'T HAVE A HEART AS IF THAT PICTURE WAZ PUT THERE ON PURPOSE NOT AS JUST SOME JOKE LIKE U WANT UR READERS 2 BELIEVE THAT UR PERFECT WELL CHILD IM HERE 2 TELL U THAT U AINT NOWHERE NEAR PERFECT SO IF U ASK ME U NEED 2 GET UR INFO AN UR FACTS STR8 CUZ HONEY U JUST GONE LOST UR MIND AN UR MEMORY AN ANOTHER THING MISS THANG UR READERS MAY B ABLE 2 READ THA MAG BUT NOT UR MIND THEY AINT MIND READERS U KNOW SO GET THAT TUDE OF URS IN CHEAK B4 SOMEBODY BEATS UR AZZ SO FAR DOWN THAT UR IN HELL BY THA TIME THERE DONE AN PUTS U IN UR PLACE CUZ ON THA STREETS WHERE I COME FROM UD NEVER LAST 1 NIGHT ROUND THA BANGERS CUZ WE B STR8 UP HARDCORE AS THEY COME

Survivor198020@aol.com

p.p.s.an 1 more thing uz aint got 2 b so rude an so ignant 2 peeps who write 2 u an try an b nice an sweet 2 uz cuz sweetheart that sure tha hell aint no way of making friends

Wow, another satisfied reader. Now only if this person channeled that passion into something more meaningful, like school. This "survivor" could very well be the next great rocket scientist. From the looks of this letter, this person is certainly on his way to being one. □

krew-cuts

By Frank Krewda

She's a beauty. Back in the late-1990s, when I started writing this column, I dedicated one issue a year to the women of wrestling. Admittedly, those columns focused primarily on their looks. With three national wrestling promotions breaching decency standards week after week, who really knew—or cared—which lady could hold her own on the mat?

Referee Nick Patrick may not appreciate Victoria's penchant for disrupting matches involving her man, Steven Richards. But there is a lot about Victoria that most men can appreciate.

Well, women's wrestling has changed. In case you haven't watched *Raw* in, say, the past four months, here's the memo: Some, if not most, of the WWE divas can pull off a competitive and compelling bout—without baring yards of skin. And they can do it week in and week out.

However, one thing hasn't changed. I can still appreciate these lovely ladies for their looks. So here's how I rate the current class of WWE gals in seven critical categories:

There's something about ... Victoria. Despite her gimmick as a stringy-haired, chalky-complexioned mental case, Victoria appeals to many male fans. Some might consider her antics a turnoff, but only a fool would dispute her good looks. We're talking about a former fitness model here!

Nidia. Any man that turns his nose up at Nidia is either faking it or really doesn't know a gal like the one Nidia portrays. Remember these lyrics from the classic T-Rex song "Bang A Gong" ... "You're dirty, you're sweet, you're built like a truck, oh yeah"? Nidia embodies all three qualities, and it works very well for me.

Molly. Even when she's beating the tar out of Trish, Molly can't shed the cute, girl-next-door image. It's an aura that has captivated men for years.

The one ass-et worth seizing: Trish Stratus. Clearly, WWE could have never molded her into the *well-rounded* (emphasis mine) performer she has become by letting her parade around the ring in "tights" that were two sizes too small. Now she wears full-length pants in what appear to be close to the same size.

Honorable mention goes to Dawn Marie, whom WWE apparently has no intention of molding into a serious threat to the women's title (hence her placement on the Smackdown roster). I sincerely hope Dawn accomplishes great things in WWE. But in the meantime, I'm content to watch her wrestle in gear that doesn't quite fit.

Legs to die for: Stacy Keibler. What else can be said about those 42-inch pins? No wonder Test is stupid enough to tangle with Scott Steiner. I'd wrestle him, too, if Stacy was the booty (pun most definitely intended). Shaniqua (Linda Miles) comes in a close second. Few males possess quads as sculpted as hers, and women her glutes.

She ought to be in pictures: Jackie Gayda. Of course, she needs more time in OVW to polish her wrestling skills. But when it comes to her looks, I can't see any room for improvement. Her beauty should make her a fixture on the Raw roster even if her wrestling ability never comes around.

Same goes for Ivory. While this veteran is far from glamorous in the

traditional sense, there's something about her effervescent personality and plain features that radiates—and it doesn't hurt that she has a hot physique.

And we can't forget about Torrie Wilson. Okay, so her acting will probably keep her out of pictures. But she was in *Playboy,* and Hef didn't come a-calling for no reason. Wilson is the complete package: a gorgeous face, a stunning build, and the ovarian fortitude to show it off.

Most likely not to end up at the bottom of a lake: Jacquelyn. If the new trend in breast augmentation is toward a smaller, more natural look, Jackie is certainly a throwback to the mid- and late-'90s, when bigger was a whole lot better. To her credit (and maybe to our chagrin), she has finally found a way to keep them in her top while wrestling. Unfortunately, it requires a top made of heavy-duty material.

In the all-natural division, top honors go to Molly Holly. Those conservative outfits don't hide everything.

Stacy Keibler has the best face and legs of any WWE diva, according to resident diva expert Frank Krewda. Of course the rest of her isn't bad, either.

You really can't help noticing Jacquelyn's, *um,* stripes whenever she is called upon to referee a match for the Raw brand.

Bella face! Stacy. Yes, those long legs are impossible to ignore. But Stacy would be just as arresting if she wore a turtleneck sweater and corduroys on *Raw* every Monday. She's just flat-out pretty.

Sable. Impugn her morals if you like. Call her a hypocrite (you would hardly be the first to do so). You might even regard her as past her prime. But I think it's Sable's face, not her implants or name, that has kept her marketable.

Torrie Wilson. She has two big ones, all right—two big, beautiful blue eyes to go along with her high cheekbones, perfect teeth, and thick lips. Billy Kidman, you lucky dog!

The fine wine award: Sable. One of the least-discussed aspects of Sable's WWE return has been the fact that she looks just as sexy as she did five years ago. That's not an easy feat to pull off. Just look at what time has done to Moolah and Mae Young.

Buzz cuts. Seemed as though Joanie "Chyna" Laurer was always bemoaning the lack of female competition when she wrestled in WWE. With Shaniqua running roughshod over a few of the men and all the ladies on the Smackdown side, a dream match between them would get my PPV dollars. Now that Joanie's New Japan venture has ground to a halt, is a one-time shot in WWE out of the question? Shaniqua certainly has the physical tools to give Laurer the challenge she craved ... Also on the screeching halt front: Notice how newcomer Gail Kim's mega-push evaporated almost immediately after she flubbed a few maneuvers on a few *Raw* shows. Taking the women's belt off her was fitting punishment, but making her provide, *um,* favors to Raw GM Eric Bischoff? Talk about excessive! □

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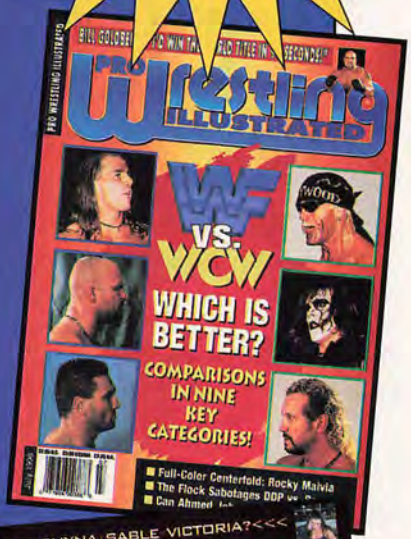

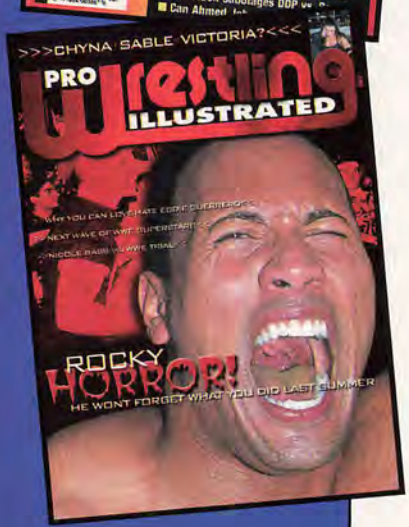

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September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

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February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

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June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

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April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil. Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

July 1997: Steve Austin: Stone-Cold And Uncensored! Centerfold: "Diamond" Dallas Page. Plus: Rocky Maivia, The Road Warriors, The Eliminators, Nick Patrick.

December 1997: Ken Shamrock's Deadly Climb To The Top. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Eddy Guerrero, Perry Saturn, WWF light heavyweights.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

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November 1998: Vince Mc(Mad)Man! He Crossed The Bottom Line ... Now He'll Pay! Centerfold: Kevin Nash. Plus: Sting, Bret Hart, Taz-Douglas, New Age Outlaws.

December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever! Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

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October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

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May 2000: The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

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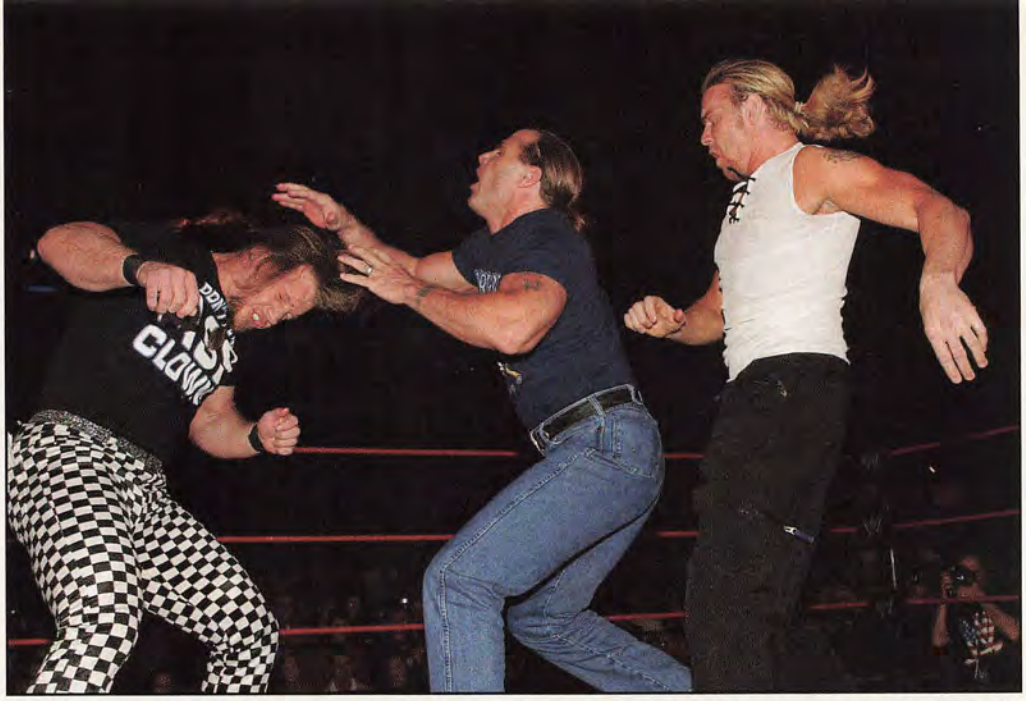
press conference...



Christian always seems to be involved in interesting feuds. Here he gets caught in the middle of the Chris Jericho-Shawn Michaels war. He'll have a lot of Raw stars coming after that I-C belt of his soon.

CHRIST

WHEN RAW CO-GENERAL manager Steve Austin announced that he was reinstating WWE's Intercontinental title earlier this year, a lot of Raw superstars began formulating a plan to make the title theirs. After all, Triple-H had been dominating the Raw title scene, and without a secondary title to pursue, many wrestlers were left directionless. They wanted championship gold, too.

The battle royal to decide the new champion was held at Judgment Day and was loaded with former I-C champs. Val Venis, Test, Rob Van Dam, Lance Storm, Goldust, Chris Jericho, and Christian entered the match. So did Booker T, the only entrant never to have won the title. However, Christian outlasted every one of his opponents—and outwitted Booker—to claim his second I-C title.

In the weeks that followed, Christian, who was already quite high on himself, became even more self-absorbed. He claimed he was the new people's champion (a boast that was squashed after Rock laid the smack down on it) and continued to pat himself on the back even though he survived most of his title defenses thanks to underhanded tactics. However, on the July 7 ***Raw,*** *that good fortune came to an end when Booker T beat Christian for the title.*

But Christian kept right on pursuing the championship. Nothing could convince him to give up the chase, not losing a high-profile rematch to Booker a week later and not Booker pinning him in a tag team match two weeks after that. For the first time since he became primarily a singles wrestler, Christian was displaying something akin to dedication!

Christian's tenacity paid off. On August 10, at a house show in Des Moines, Iowa, Christian met an injured Booker T for the I-C title and won it back. One night later on ***Raw,*** *it became apparent that the new champ's swagger had returned—even if the respect of WWE's officials and fans hadn't.*

PWI *wanted to talk to Christian, so Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker, Senior Writer Will Welsh, and Contributing Writer Matt Brock met with him to discuss his reign as Intercontinental champ, his feud with Booker T, and why he thinks he gets no respect, among other topics and people in WWE.*

Every issue, reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport.

IAN

"Listen, I beat Booker once, then I beat him again, and then again, and then again ... If he had kept his body in better shape, maybe he wouldn't have injured himself. Blame him for letting himself get injured."

DAVE LENKER: Thanks for sitting down with us, Christian. How's WWE's favorite Intercontinental champion doing?

CHRISTIAN: What do you mean, "How's WWE's *favorite* Intercontinental champion doing?" I'm the *only* I-C champion, baby! The *only* one!

LENKER: I recognize that, Christian, but ... ah, never mind. How are you doing? You're looking a little banged up.

CHRISTIAN: Because I'm defending the title so much, I can't help it, but they're only bumps and bruises. Nothing the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time can't get over.

MATT BROCK: Oh, get over yourself, pal. Greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time, my cigar! Pedro Morales could've wrapped you up like a piece of string! Magnificent Muraco would've chewed you up and spit you out! Heck, The Mountie might ...

CHRISTIAN: Okay, who decided to bring the corpse along? I thought you jokers had retired him from interviews.

LENKER: Everyone else was unavailable, Christian, sorry about this.

CHRISTIAN: Unavailable? Unavailable? Come on now, don't tell me that I'm getting disrespected here, too! Don't tell me that you guys don't take me seriously. I'm the Intercontinental champion, for Pete's sake! You guys are supposed to cater to me and make me feel like a star, yet when it's time for my interview, the best you can do is drag Brock outta the closet?! Really, all this disrespect is starting to get on my nerves.

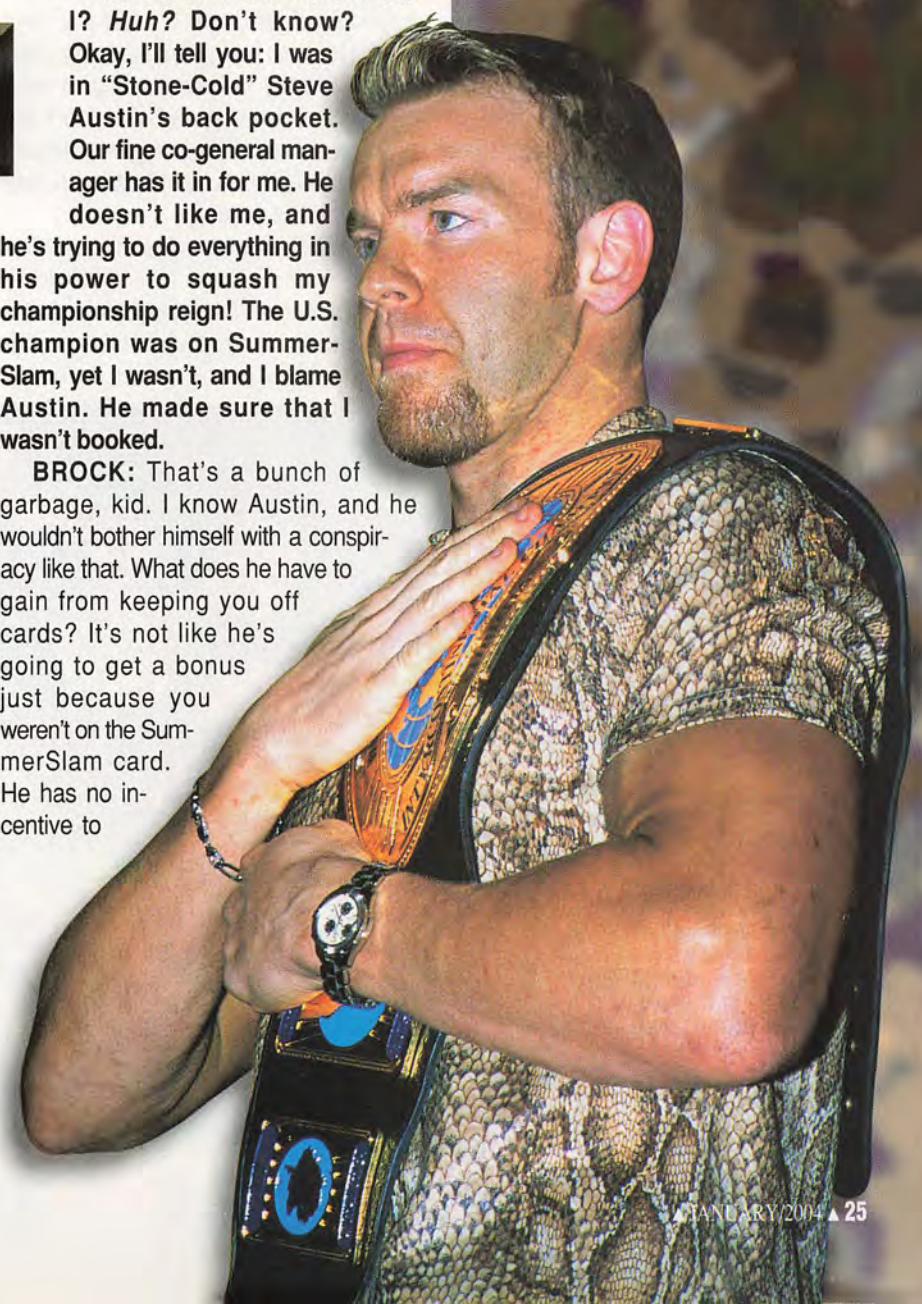
WILL WELSH: Christian, what's all this about disrespect? You have a prominent place on Raw's roster, you're getting tons of TV time, and you're the Intercontinental champion. I don't see where you should have a gripe. Where's the disrespect?

CHRISTIAN: It's all over the place! How come I wasn't on SummerSlam, huh? Don't you think the Intercontinental champion should defend his title on the second-most important pay-per-view of the year?

WELSH: I definitely do.

CHRISTIAN: Then where was I? *Huh?* Don't know? Okay, I'll tell you: I was in "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin's back pocket. Our fine co-general manager has it in for me. He doesn't like me, and he's trying to do everything in his power to squash my championship reign! The U.S. champion was on SummerSlam, yet I wasn't, and I blame Austin. He made sure that I wasn't booked.

BROCK: That's a bunch of garbage, kid. I know Austin, and he wouldn't bother himself with a conspiracy like that. What does he have to gain from keeping you off cards? It's not like he's going to get a bonus just because you weren't on the SummerSlam card. He has no incentive to



screw you over.

CHRISTIAN: Yeah, he does. He doesn't want to give me an opportunity to show that I'm a better Intercontinental champion than he was! He's jealous, old man. Just like you are, because you're both the same. This sport has passed both of you by, and you're two of the last remaining dinosaurs around. See, there was a time that he had it all over me. When I debuted, he was king of the hill, but now age has taken its toll and he's upset that a young, handsome guy like myself has replaced him in the pecking order. He's a bitter old man, just like you.

LENKER: All right, Christian, even if that is so—and I don't think it is—why didn't Eric Bischoff get you on the SummerSlam card?

CHRISTIAN: You saw what he had on his plate, didn't ya? He had to wrestle Shane McMahon! Considering that he's not a wrestler and he was wrestling that night, it probably slipped his mind. That's forgivable. He's a brilliant man, but he's not superhuman.

WELSH: It seems like you're not exactly being fair, like you're holding Austin to a higher standard.

CHRISTIAN: Fair, shmair. When this world starts being fair to me, I'll start being fair to it. Until that happens, I'm going to keep my peepulation happy by holding on to this title.

BROCK: Peepulation ... where'd you learn that word, at the local nickelodeon?

LENKER: Give it a break, Matt. You're here to interview Christian, not to belittle him.

BROCK: Whatever you say, Mr. Editor-in-Chief.

WELSH: This was such a bad idea ...

LENKER: Let's get by this, okay? Christian, what did you have against Booker T? He's a standup guy, so what was your beef with him?

CHRISTIAN: He wanted my Intercontinental title, that's what my beef was. He was trying to take my title, which means he was trying to take money from my wallet, food off my plate, and peeps from my peepulation. I'm gonna have a problem with any joker who tries that.

LENKER: But that's the nature of this business. If it wasn't him, it would've been someone else. A champion's job is to defend his title to the best of his abilities, not to go show to show just coasting along. What were you expecting to happen when you became champion—that you'd never have any title defenses?

CHRISTIAN: Listen, I beat Booker once, then I beat him again, and then again, and then again.

WELSH: But he eventually beat you, despite all those losses you handed him.

CHRISTIAN: He got lucky.

BROCK: Yeah, he got lucky enough to beat you in the rematch, too. And then, when you won the title back, you did it while he had a bad back. You faced Booker when he was less than 100 percent and walked away with his title, but you're okay with that. Yet you're not okay with the way he pursued the title when you held it. What doesn't add up here?

CHRISTIAN: If he had kept his body in better shape, maybe he wouldn't have injured himself. Blame him for letting himself get injured.

LENKER: I can tell that this is a pointless argument. Why don't we move on. Will, you had a different idea for this "Press Conference." I think you wanted to do some name association. Why don't you start?

WELSH: Okay, Christian, we're going to rattle off some names. Tell us the first thoughts that come into your mind. Let's

Spike Dudley was Christian's first challenger after he beat Booker T in a house show match in August. Though videotape and photos will show Spike gave him a scare (above and right), Christian refers to him as nothing more than a "warmup."

start with Eric Bischoff.

CHRISTIAN: Genius. Changed the wrestling business. A great co-general manager to work for.

WELSH: Edge.

CHRISTIAN: Who? Oh, Edge. Yeah, him. What do you want me to say about him other than he's injured? He's a non-issue. He's not even a Raw wrestler. I wouldn't be surprised if he just retired.

LENKER: Have you no sympathy?

CHRISTIAN: Sympathy is for losers like you three jackasses. That's why you're interviewing me and not the other way around. You have sympathy, I don't, and that makes me a winner.

WELSH: Okay ... moving along. How about Spike Dudley? He was one of your first opponents after you won the I-C belt.

CHRISTIAN: Spike? Why are we talking about him? I picked him up at daycare the other day and kept an eye on him while his mom ran some errands. Cute kid.

LENKER: He's a cute kid who gave you a good run the other day. He almost stole your title.

CHRISTIAN: That was a fluke match. Sure, he had me on the ropes, but I beat him back. He's no threat. Basically just a warmup for me.

WELSH: If you say so, but it sure didn't look that way. What about Chris Jericho?

CHRISTIAN: A good Canadian and an ever better friend. My peeps are proud to support him in everything he does.

WELSH: The Rock.

CHRISTIAN: Once a great people's champion, but past his prime now, unfortunately. The guy's too busy in Hollywood to even see his people! How he can even call himself the people's champion is beyond me. Maybe he should strap on those wrestling boots more often.

LENKER: Shawn Michaels.

CHRISTIAN: Another has-been, like Austin. He's trying to recapture some of that old magic so he can feel young again, but the only thing that he'll catch if he gets in the ring with me is a fist upside the head. No challenge whatsoever.

BROCK: Goldberg.

CHRISTIAN: He's an outsider, plain and simple. He doesn't belong here, and he never should have come here. Half the guys don't even want him here. I don't want him here.

BROCK: What? Can't he make a living?

CHRISTIAN: Sure, he can make a living, but I just wish he'd do it somewhere else. Somewhere he's wanted.

LENKER: The fans sure seem to want him.

CHRISTIAN: Apparently you're talking to a bogus group of fans. You talk to any of my peeps, and they'll tell you that the only place Goldchump belongs is far away from me.

WELSH: Okay, one last one: Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time. One of the most beloved wrestlers of all-time. First ballot Hall of Famer. All-around great guy with a great sense of humor.

WELSH: Anything else?

CHRISTIAN: Oh, yeah, he's one heck of an interview, too. □

Christian is looking for opponents with higher profiles than Maven (below), but he could put himself in a very vulnerable position if he doesn't tone that famous cockiness of his.

Ah, Christian never turns down an opportunity to take a shot at long-time tag team partner Edge. He revels in the fact that he's enjoying tremendous success while Edge is on the injured list.

"Every time he's experienced success, he's gone on to experience far more dramatic failure. This dastardly cycle of events has kept him from pursuing long-lasting success and in-ring glory. It's kept an untold number of WWE champions safe from his wrath ..."

ALL FIRED UP

CAN KANE BLAZE A TRAIL TO THE RAW TITLE?

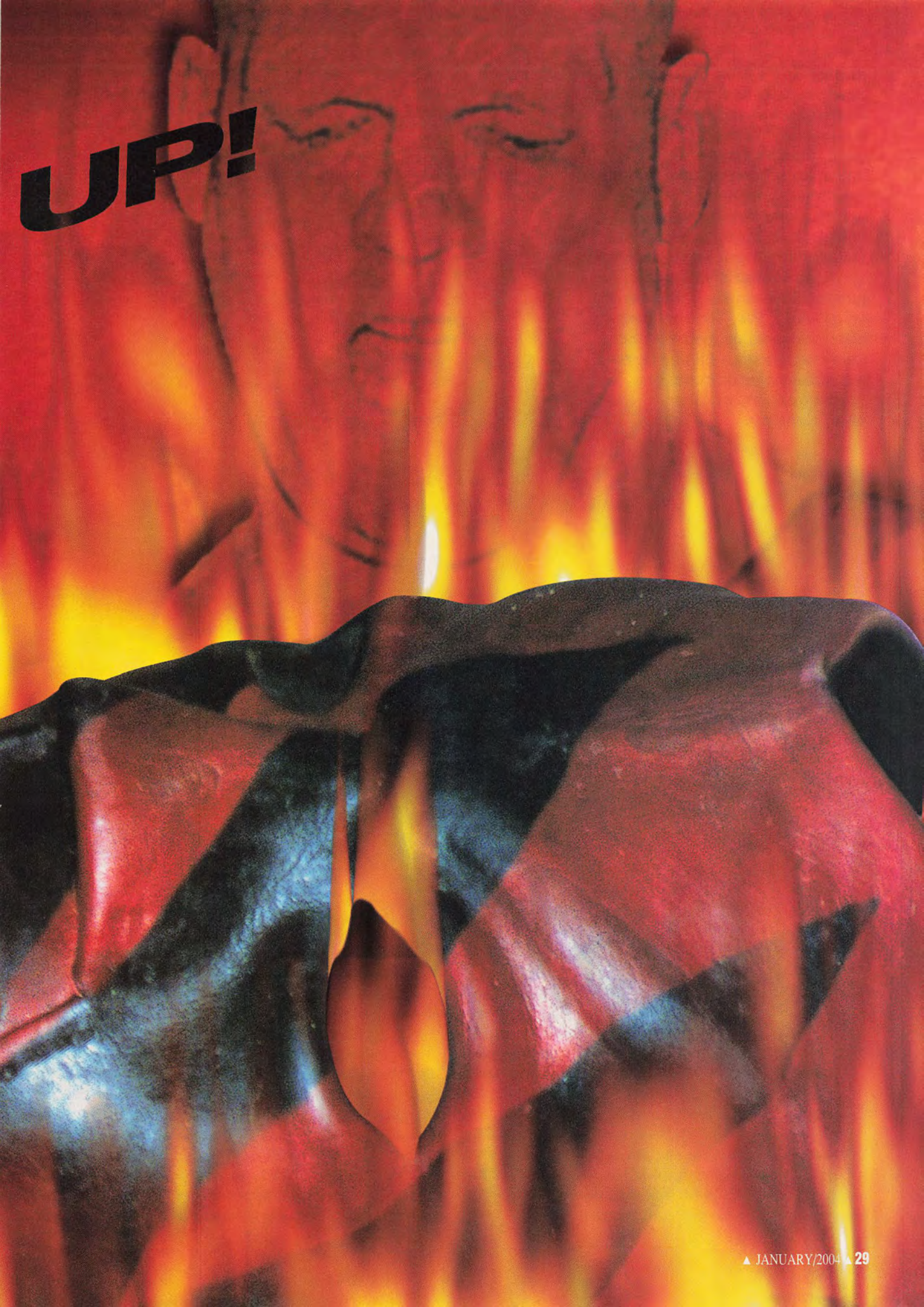
Photos by James McAfee

By Liz Hunter

KANE SAT IN the back of the paddy wagon designed to carry men half his size. His head was newly shaven, his face newly exposed only weeks earlier. He looked out the back and saw six armed guards standing there, waiting to escort him to the ring. He grunted, then shifted in his seat. An alarmed security guard slammed his baton against the cold steel, apparently thinking that such a mundane action would keep Kane's large frame from emitting any further noise. Kane heard the guard's action but didn't give the man the satisfaction of reacting to it. *Do they really think they're capable of containing my rage? Kane thought. If only they knew what I've been through, what I've experienced in my life. They don't realize that I'm comfortable in a cage, that it's only inside a cage that I feel truly at home. When they removed my mask, they took away my cage and unleashed my rage. Now it's time to make them pay, to make them all pay ...*

...

Kane has, for six long years, been one of WWE's most intriguing characters. Introduced to WWE fans in 1997 as The

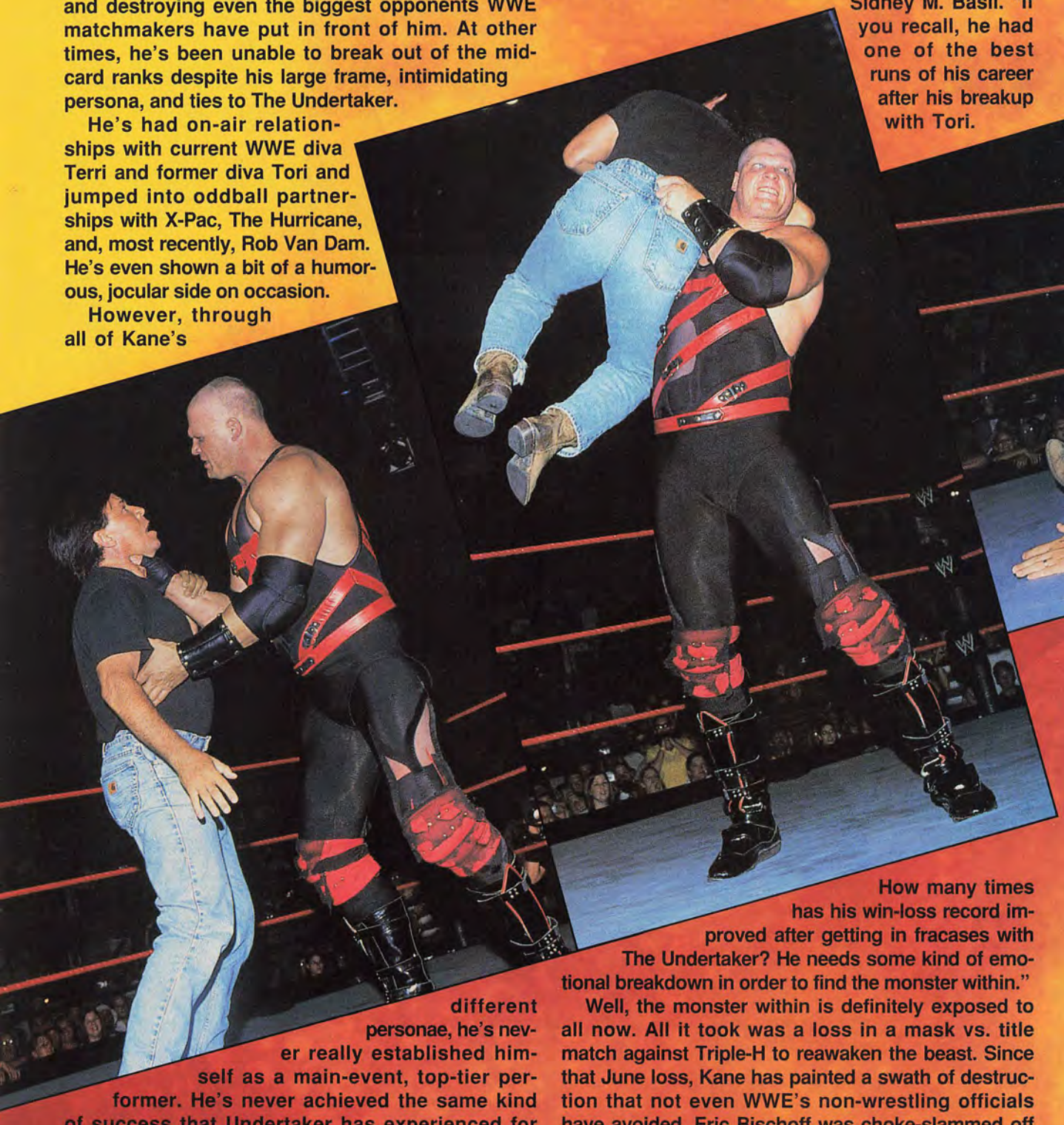

UP!

Undertaker's little brother, he's had an up-and-down career. At times he's been WWE's biggest monster, capable of beating anyone at any time and destroying even the biggest opponents WWE matchmakers have put in front of him. At other times, he's been unable to break out of the mid-card ranks despite his large frame, intimidating persona, and ties to The Undertaker.

He's had on-air relationships with current WWE diva Terri and former diva Tori and jumped into oddball partnerships with X-Pac, The Hurricane, and, most recently, Rob Van Dam. He's even shown a bit of a humorous, jocular side on occasion.

However, through all of Kane's different personae, he's never really established himself as a main-event, top-tier performer. He's never achieved the same kind of success that Undertaker has experienced for the majority of his WWE career. And even though he may have hid his frustrations well, his inability to achieve consistent results against the sport's top stars began to weigh on him heavily. The humiliation of losing his mask was the proverbial suplex that broke this monster's back.

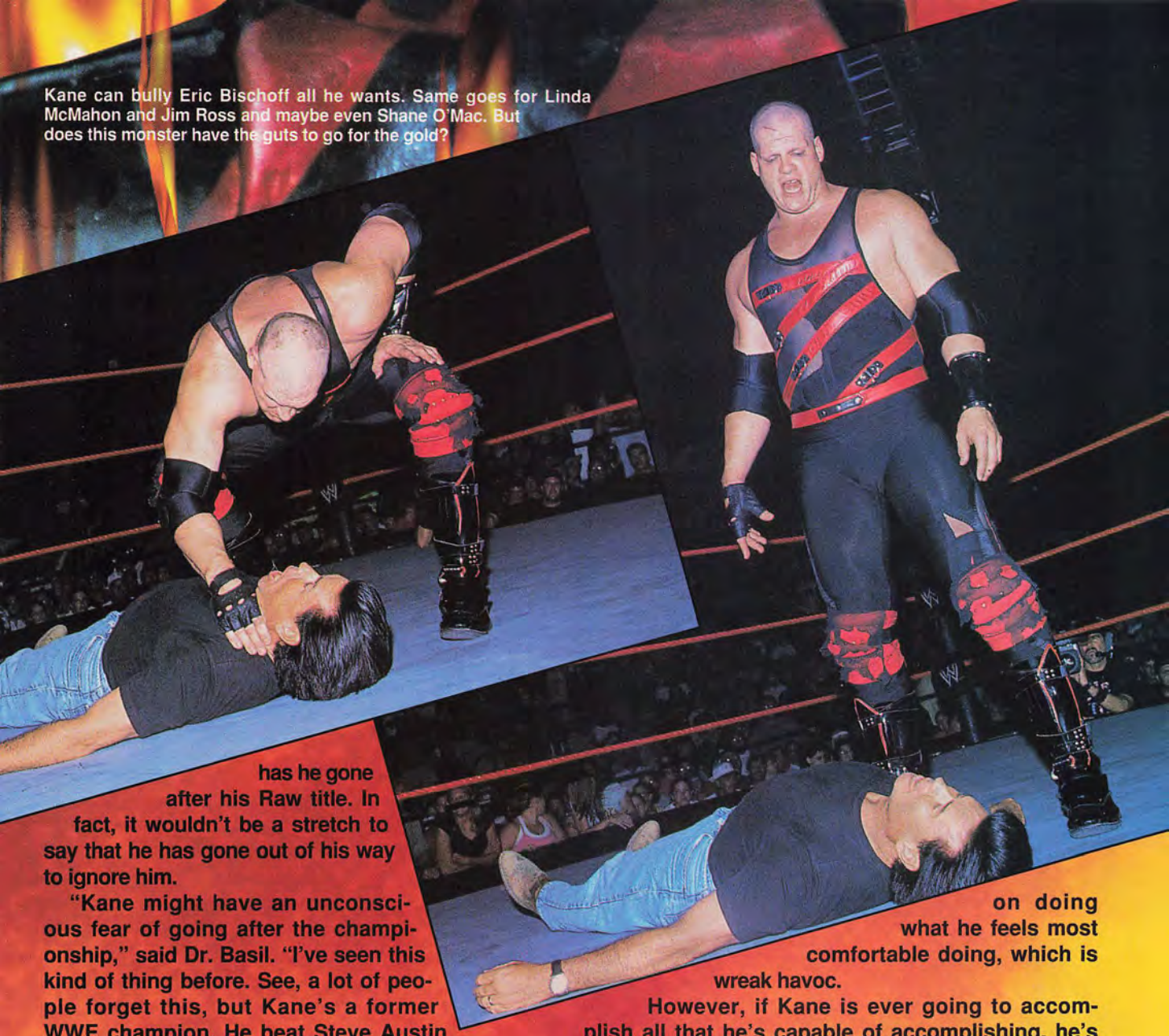
"If you study Kane's career, it looks like he's needed something tragic to spur his competitive side," reasoned renowned wrestling psychologist Dr. Sidney M. Basil. "If you recall, he had one of the best runs of his career after his breakup with Tori.



How many times has his win-loss record improved after getting in fracases with The Undertaker? He needs some kind of emotional breakdown in order to find the monster within."

Well, the monster within is definitely exposed to all now. All it took was a loss in a mask vs. title match against Triple-H to reawaken the beast. Since that June loss, Kane has painted a swath of destruction that not even WWE's non-wrestling officials have avoided. Eric Bischoff was choke-slammed off the *Raw* stage and onto the floor below. Jim Ross was nearly burned alive. Linda McMahon was tombstoned on a steel ramp.

Oddly enough, the man who forced Kane to remove the mask by defeating him, Triple-H, has remained unscathed. Kane hasn't gone after him, nor



Kane can bully Eric Bischoff all he wants. Same goes for Linda McMahon and Jim Ross and maybe even Shane O'Mac. But does this monster have the guts to go for the gold?

has he gone after his Raw title. In fact, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that he has gone out of his way to ignore him.

"Kane might have an unconscious fear of going after the championship," said Dr. Basil. "I've seen this kind of thing before. See, a lot of people forget this, but Kane's a former WWE champion. He beat Steve Austin for the title at the 1998 King of the Ring pay-per-view. Of course, they don't remember Kane's reign because it lasted less than 24 hours. Austin regained the title one night later on *Raw,* and Kane hasn't held it since. He may be afraid of winning the championship a second time, because he doesn't want to suffer the failure of losing it again. His rage at everything and everyone around him is his way of releasing that fear. He's frustrated, and he doesn't know how to deal with it, so he does the only thing he knows how to do: He rages."

Kane afraid? Maybe so. Every time he's experienced success, he's gone on to experience far more dramatic failure. This dastardly cycle of events has kept him from pursuing long-lasting success and in-ring glory. It's kept an untold number of WWE champions safe from his wrath while also keeping him from achieving the triumphs that should have already started to define his career. So instead of trying to pursue championship gold, he's concentrated on doing what he feels most comfortable doing, which is wreak havoc.

However, if Kane is ever going to accomplish all that he's capable of accomplishing, he's going to have to focus on something other than simple destruction. The Raw championship is not beyond his reach. He has the skills and the strength to defeat anyone on the Raw (or even Smackdown) roster. His biggest weakness is his own psyche, and if he's been able to overcome hiding under a mask for the better part of his career, he has the wherewithal to do just about anything. Even win the Raw championship.

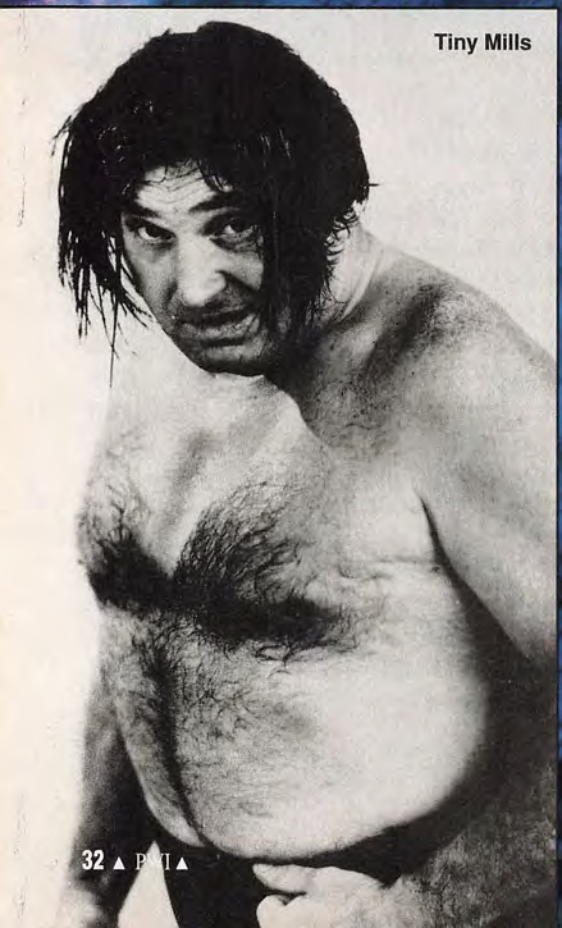
The one thing that Kane hasn't realized yet, the one thing that he can do to gain revenge, is win the Raw championship. If he wins that title, he pays everyone back ... the fans who have supported him, the opponents who have taken advantage of him, and the officials who have used him to further their own causes. In the end, he can get all the payback he wants—and he can get a bit of redemption, too.

It's time for Kane to leave his cage once and for all. □

Think Kane is the UGLIEST man in wrestling history?

CHECK OUT THESE BEAUTIES!

"Adam was the perfect figure of a man, and Eve was incredibly beautiful ... so where did all the ugly people come from?"
—Phyllis Diller



Tiny Mills

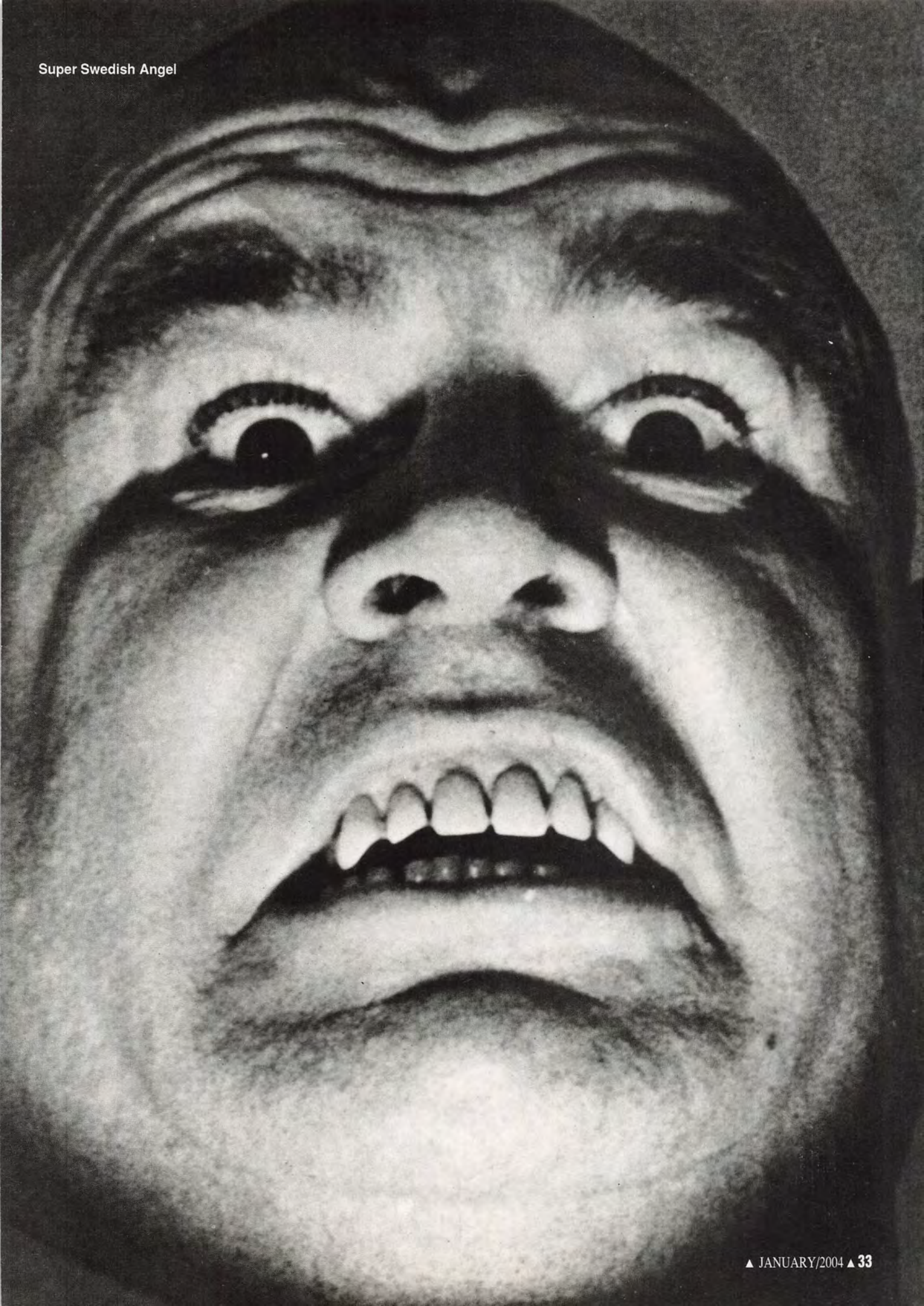
WE'RE NOT REALLY sure where the ugly people came from, Ms. Diller, but we know where a lot of them have been hiding: the photo archives of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED.

When Kane was forced to pull the mask off his face this summer, he revealed to the world a man who is not so much scarred by fire, but who is, well, just plain ugly. He might, in fact, be the ugliest man in the sport today, but he is certainly not the ugliest of all-time.

The photo essay you are about to see is the culmination of hours of research (fun research, mind you) in which our staff selected the ugliest of the ugly, wrestlers who by comparison make Kane look like The Rock.

There are some well-known uglies, like Pampero Firpo and George "The Animal" Steele. There's a variety of Angels—French, Swedish, Super Swedish, Irish. There are some wrestlers who one would have thought would sleep uninterrupted in our archives forever, like Billy Hines, La Bestia, and Marshal Blackstone. There are women with "great personalities," like Yulie Brynner, Bernice LaRue, and Micky McGinty. There's even a midget, Fuzzy Cupid.

The criterion for inclusion on these pages is very simple: You just have to be ugly, and naturally so. Wrestlers who use makeup to enhance their look, like The Missing Link and Kamala, are excluded. Masked wrestlers are, of course, excluded. A wrestler's physique is a factor, but a fatty with a

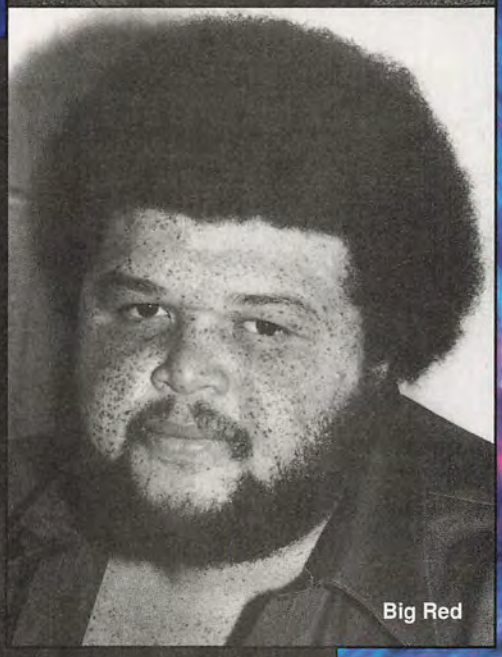

Super Swedish Angel

normal face doesn't make the cut.

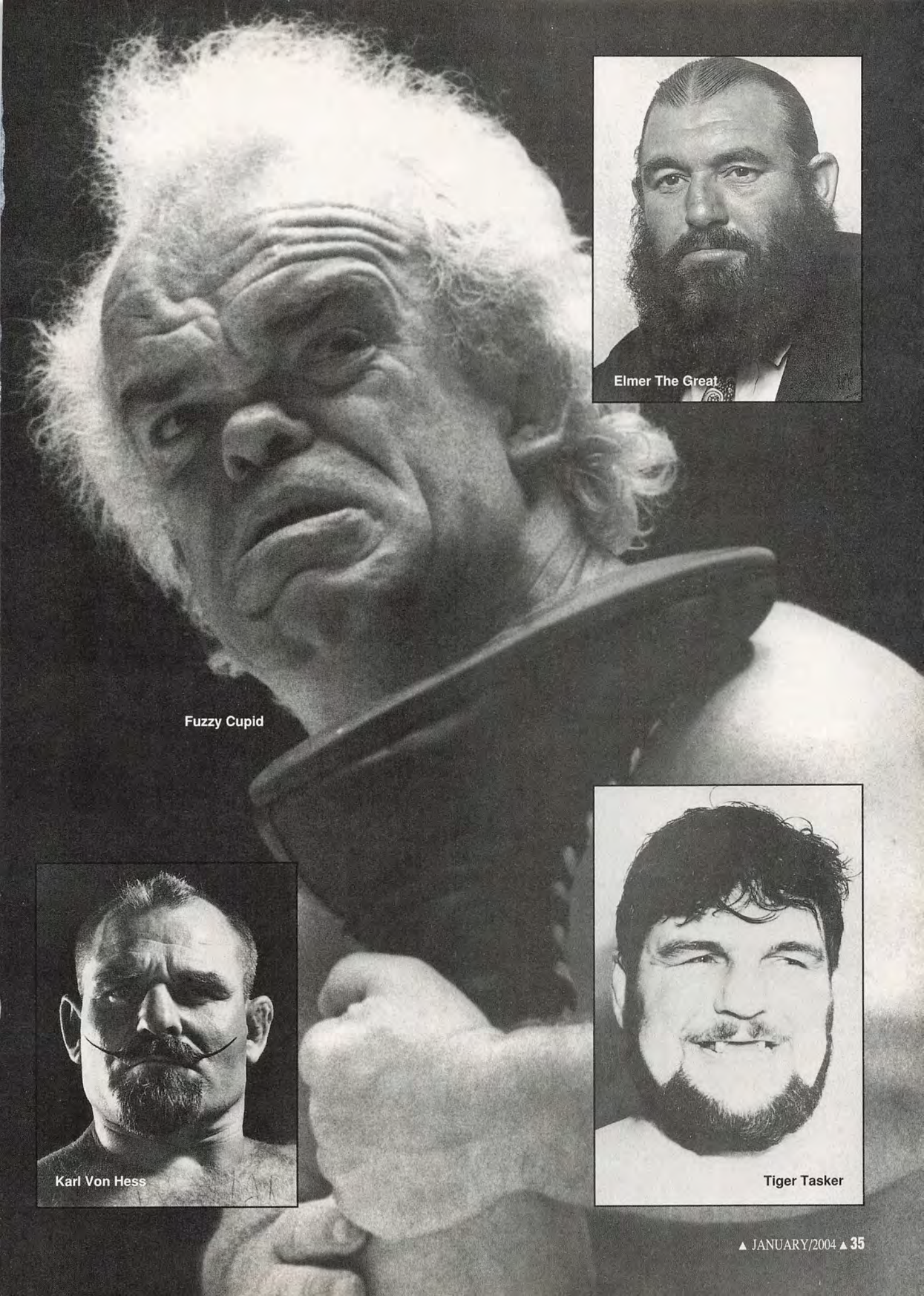
We know one thing for sure. A magazine covering any other sport but professional wrestling would never attempt to do what we have done here. Can you imaging *Pro Baseball Illustrated* featuring a similar section, including Randy Johnson, Otis Nixon, and Willie McGee? We don't think it would go over very well. But wrestling is a sport that celebrates man's (and woman's) differences. Throughout history, ugly people have thrived in this sport not in spite of their ugliness, but *because* they were ugly.

Would you care as much about Kane if he had the face of Chris Jericho? Of course not. Kane is making a fortune on his bad looks. Still, there might be times when he looks in the mirror and curses his lot in life. We'll make sure we send him a copy of this magazine. That should make him feel better!

Bernice LaRue


Big Red

Tony Galento



Elmer The Great

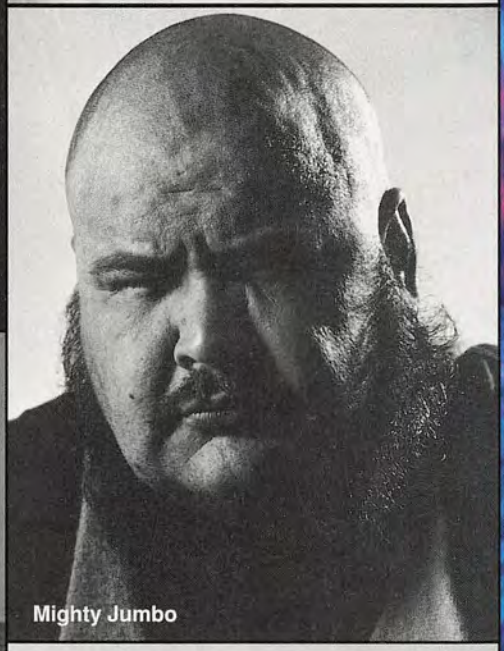
Fuzzy Cupid

Karl Von Hess

Tiger Tasker

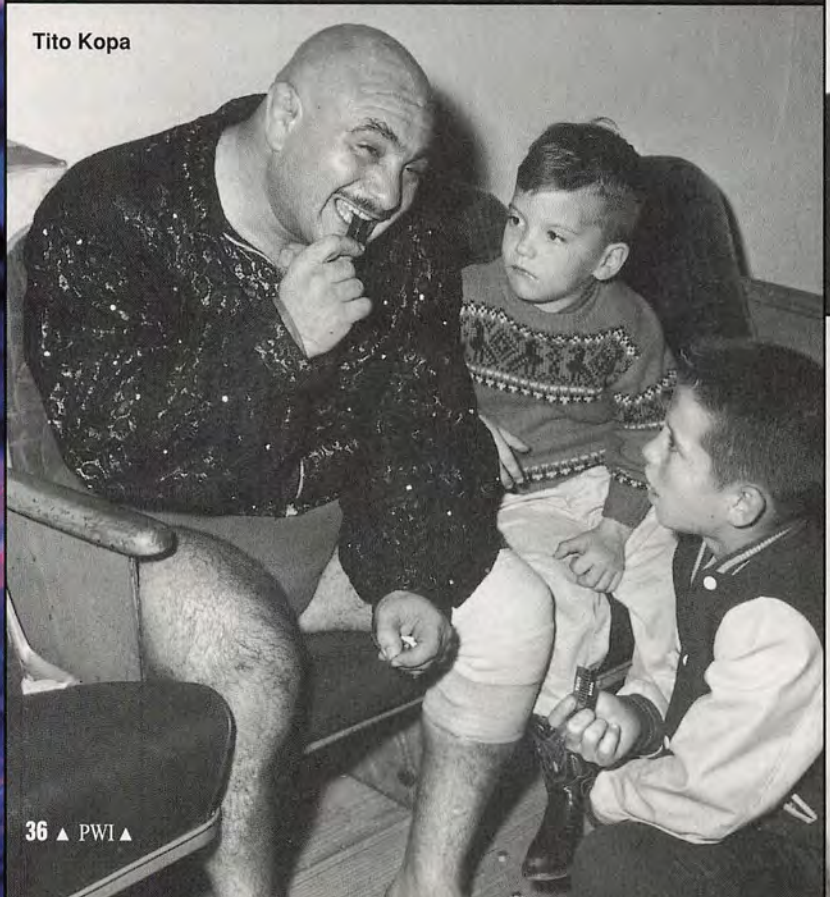
Happy Humphrey

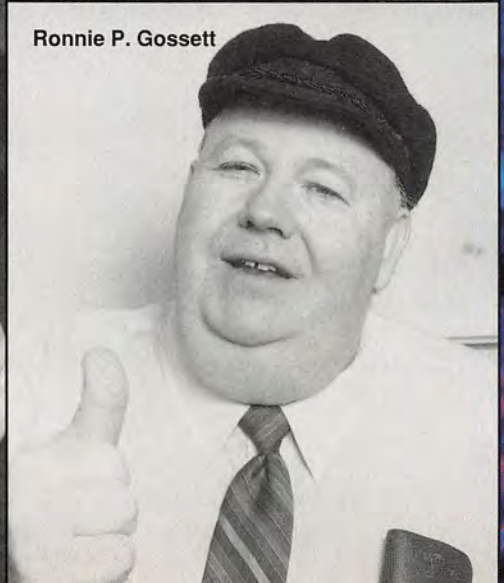
Curly Moe



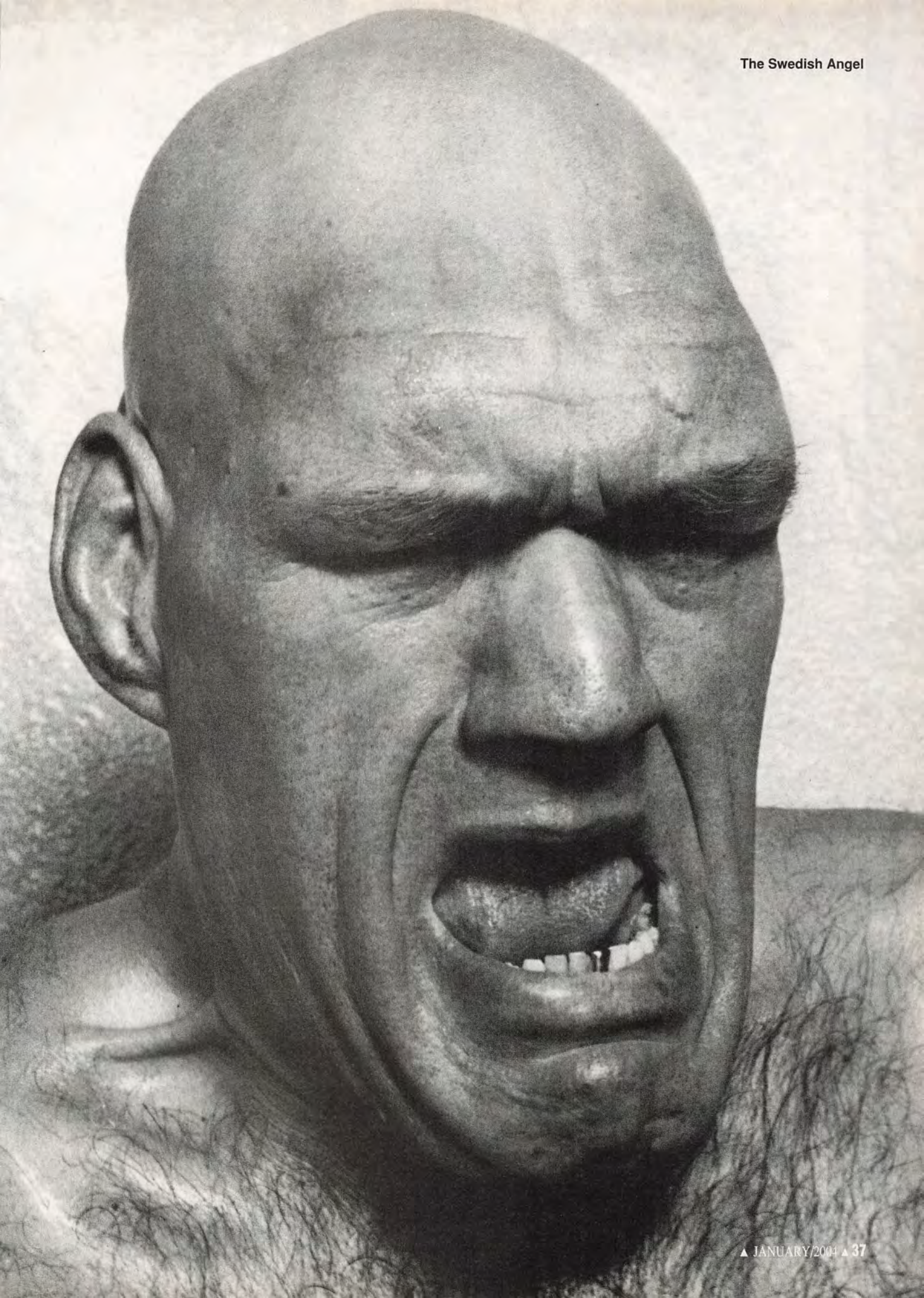
Mighty Jumbo

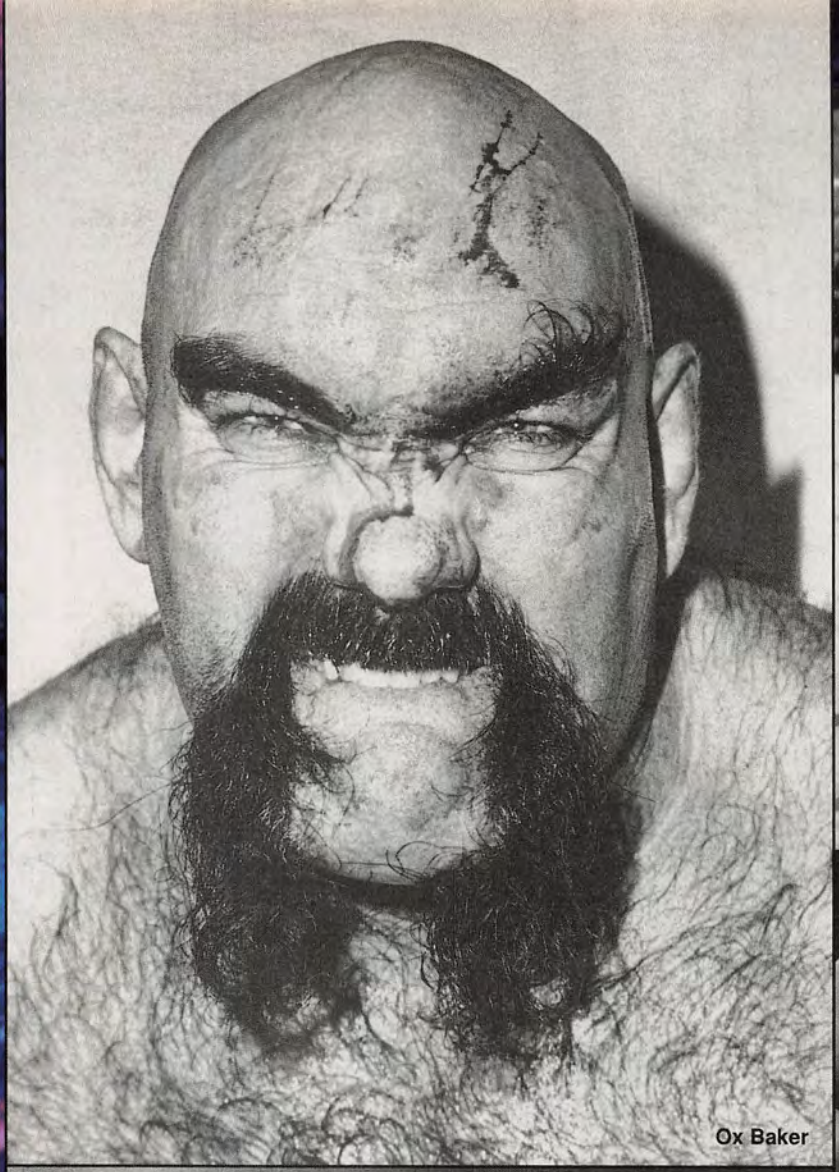
Tito Kopa





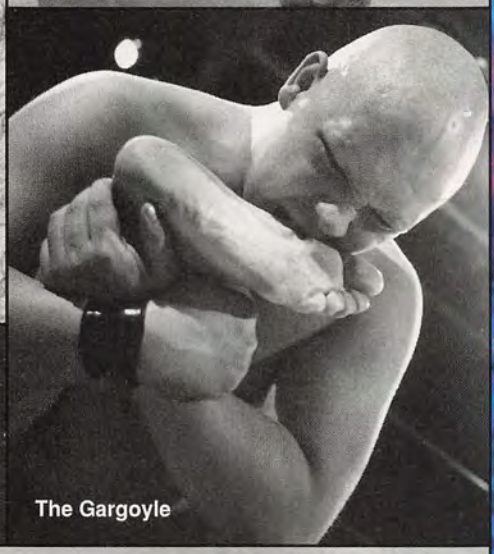
Ronnie P. Gossett





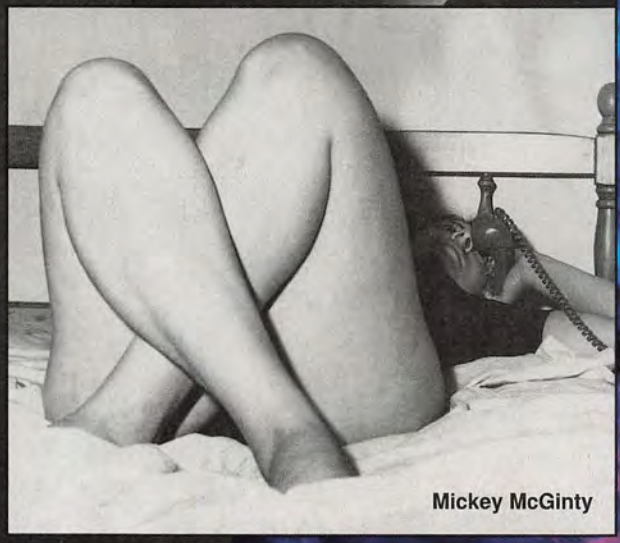
Ox Baker

Bastion Booger

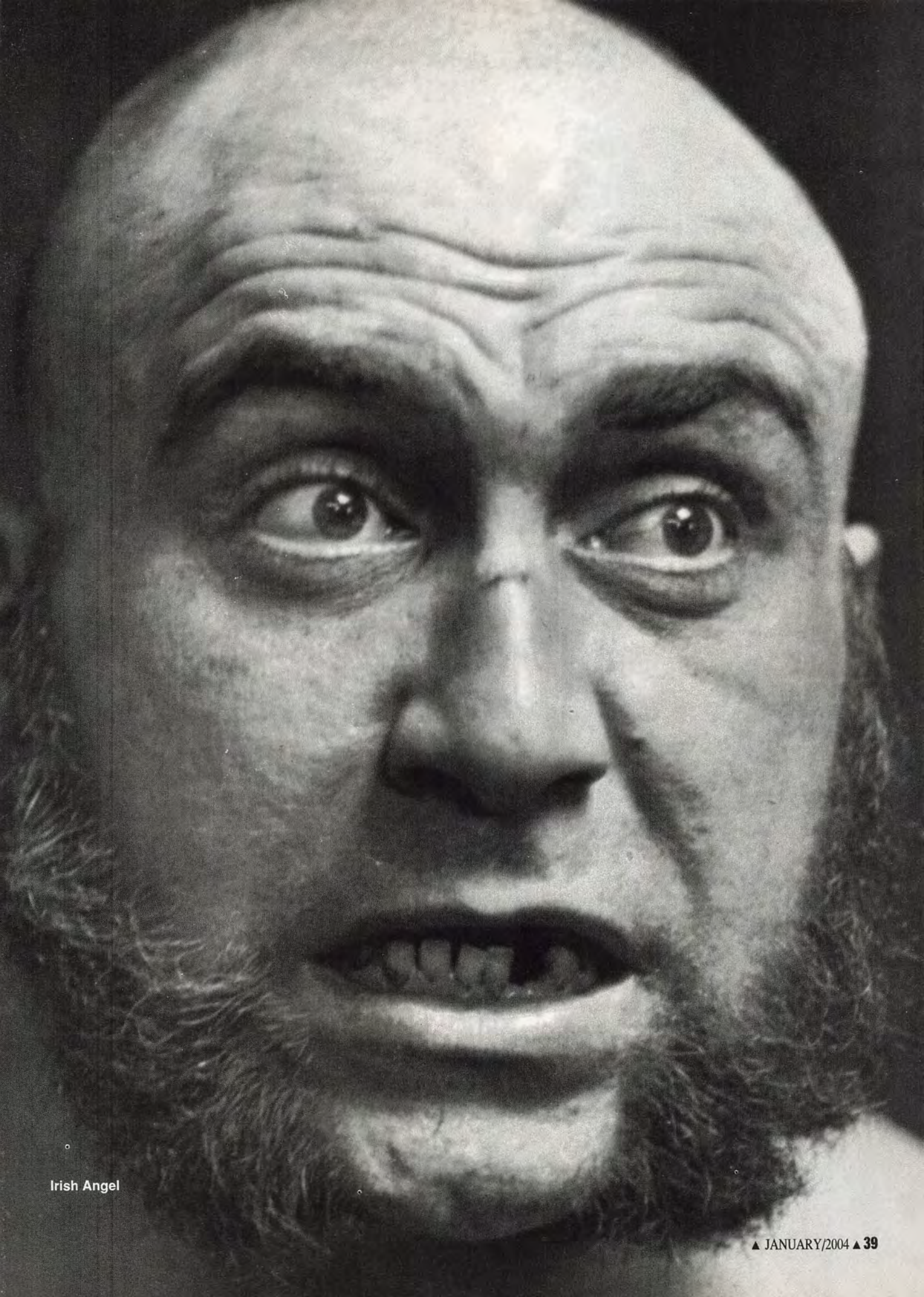


The Gargoyle

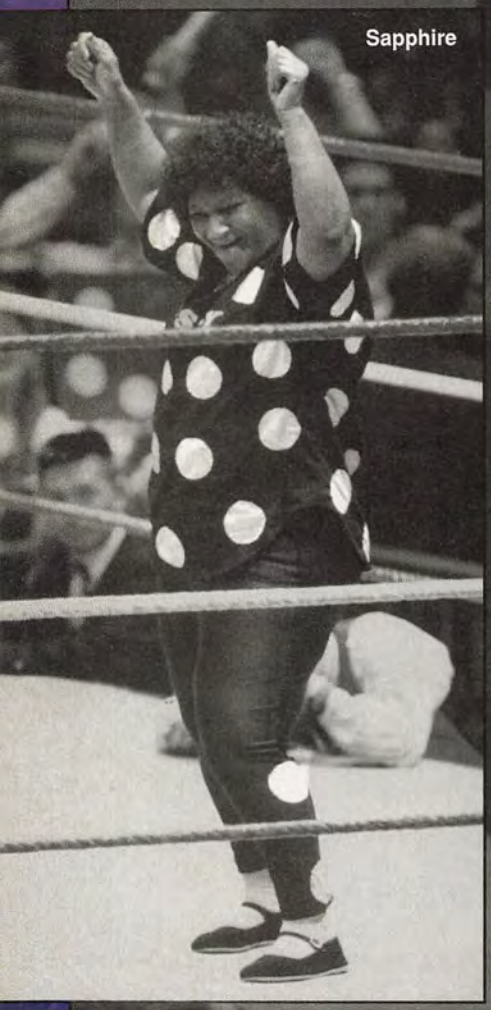
George Steele



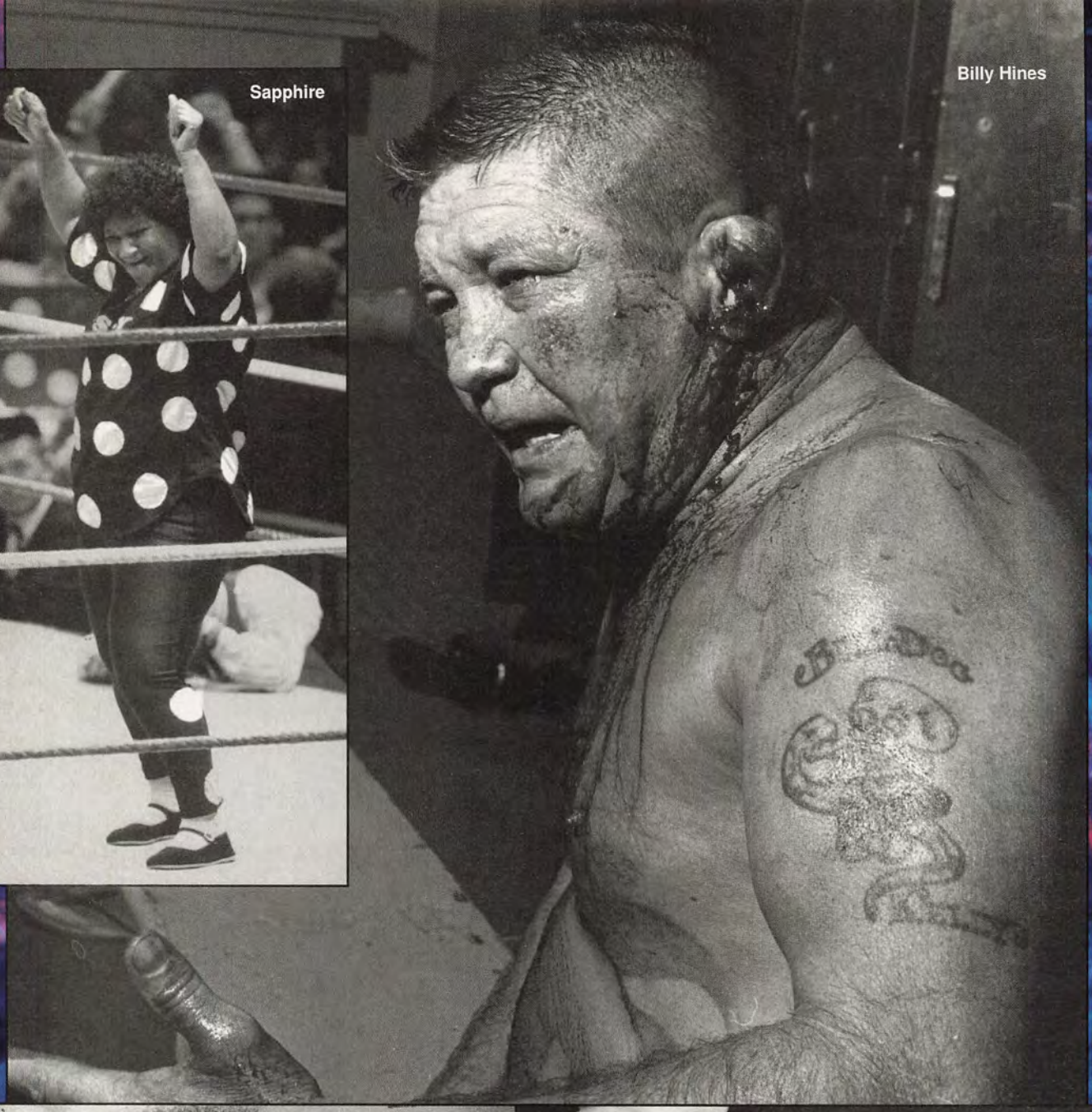
Mickey McGinty



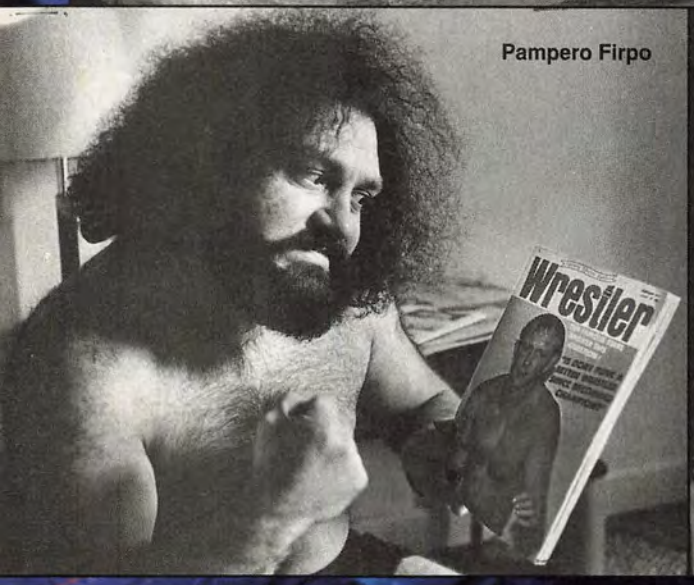
Irish Angel



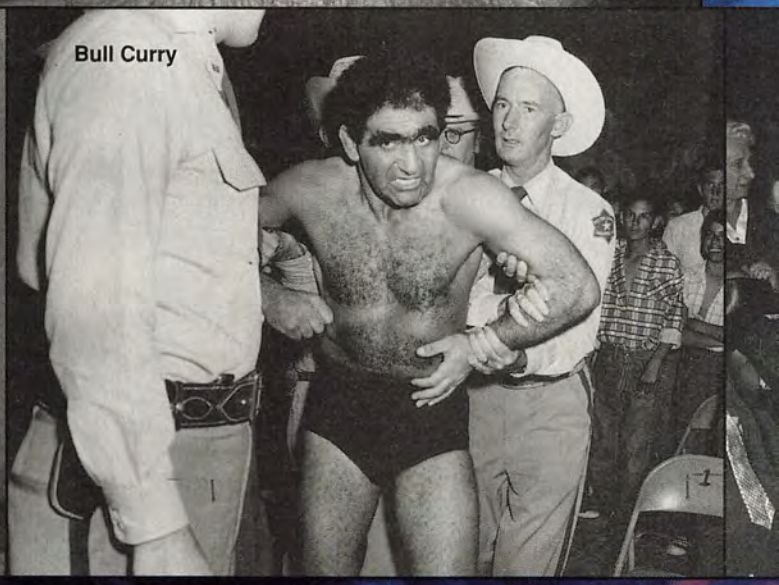
Sapphire



Billy Hines

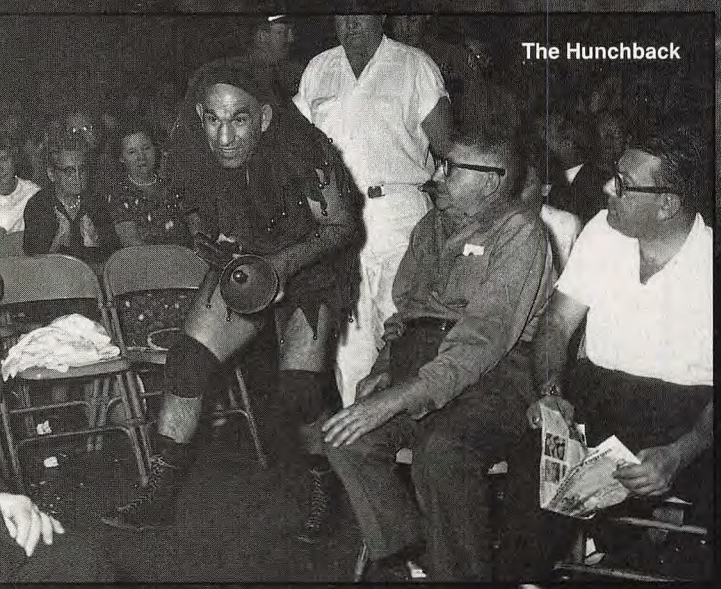


Pampero Firpo



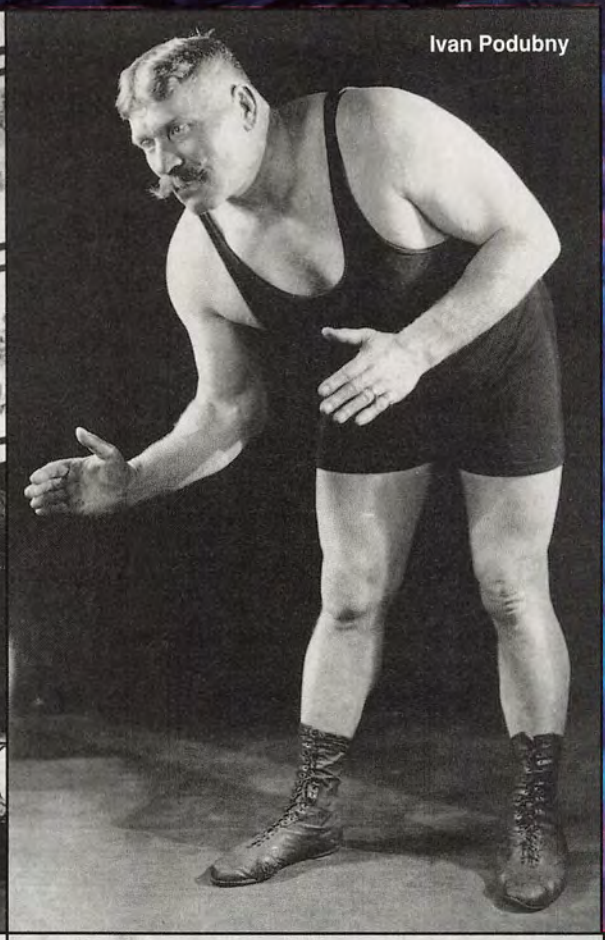
Bull Curry

The Angel



The Hunchback

Martin Levy



Ivan Podubny

Marshal Blackstone

Reginald Siki

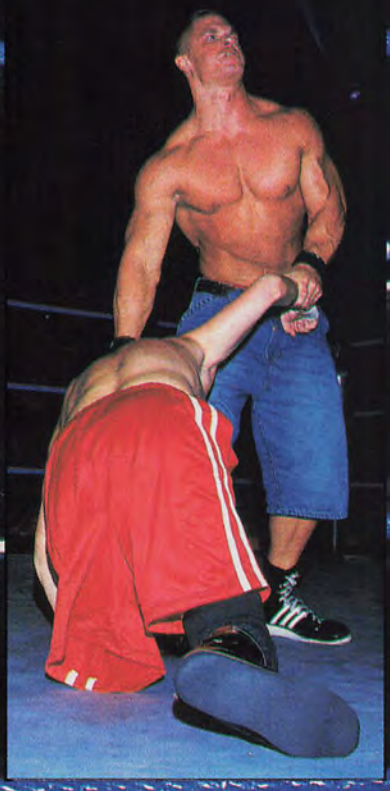
Yulie Brynner

Pancho Valdez

John Cena did ultimately put away Zach Gowen with his FU finisher at a recent *Smackdown*, but he wasn't happy that he was signed to face Gowen ... and wasn't any happier after he had beaten WWE's favorite underdog.

jo

"I Should Be In



Cena wasn't in the mood to toy with Gowen for long. He just wanted to get the match over with—that's how angry and frustrated he was.

"I throw the smack down like I'm the King Pimp
But the WWE suits got me wastin' my time, wrestlin' a gimp.
Yo, ain't no doubt I'm the top contender.
I'll dice up Angle like he got stuck in a blender.
Getting' sick and tired of hittin' this glass ceiling.
Situation don't get resolved soon, I'm gonna send punks reeling."

hnCENA:

Main Events, Not Handicap Matches!"

By Dan Murphy

JOHN CENA WANTS to know why everyone has forgotten about Backlash.

Remember Backlash? That was the pay-per-view right after WrestleMania, the one at which Cena proved he could play the pain game and hang with then-Smackdown champion Brock Lesnar.

No one gave Cena much of a chance against Lesnar at the time. After all, Lesnar was coming off a monumental WrestleMania XIX victory over Kurt Angle, and had looked virtually indestructible against other opponents. Unless he had a major letdown, Lesnar wasn't going to lose to Cena. And as expected, Lesnar ultimately pinned the would-be rapper, but Cena proved he was good enough to compete for the WWE championship. He deserved that title match. Cena suffered a loss, but it was a huge moral victory. Surely, more title pay-per-view title shots would come in due time.

Or maybe not.

One month after his first PPV title shot, Cena dropped all the way down to the opening match at Judgment Day. Cena teamed with the decidedly mid-card Chuck Palumbo and Johnny Stamboli in essentially a meaningless six-man tag match against Spanky, Rhyno, and Chris Benoit. He was pinned by the Undertaker in a featured match at Vengeance and was left off the card entirely at SummerSlam.

Much of the momentum that Cena clearly had after WrestleMania has evaporated. In the weeks prior to SummerSlam, Cena

Photos by James McAfee

was fuming about being left off the second-biggest show of the year. And although the opening rap on the previous page is ours and not Cena's, it's one he very well could have penned and voiced. When he was booked in a match against Zach Gowen back in August, he nearly exploded.

"I should be in main events, not handicap matches!" Cena spat when informed of the match, making reference to Gowen's physical handicap. He then stormed out of the locker room, spewing a stream of expletives in his wake. Since then, Cena has been in a surly mood, even around fellow heels.

"The man is just so damn frustrated sometimes," Stamboli admitted. "He got so close to the championship he could taste it, and now he can't buy another shot. It's really affecting him, personally and professionally."

Things don't figure to get too much better for Cena in the next few months, either. Sure, WWE is in dire need of new main event talent. But the reigning Smackdown champion, Kurt Angle, has his hands full with Lesnar. And The Big Show and (by virtue of his win over Cena at Vengeance) The Undertaker are ahead of Cena in line for title shots, as are Eddie Guerrero and probably Chris Benoit. At press time, he was putting himself in a good position to challenge for the U.S. title held by Guerrero. But the very idea of stepping down from the Smackdown title and competing for a "secondary" championship nauseates the former Ohio Valley Wrestling kingpin. Cena doesn't have anywhere to go but to keep running in place.

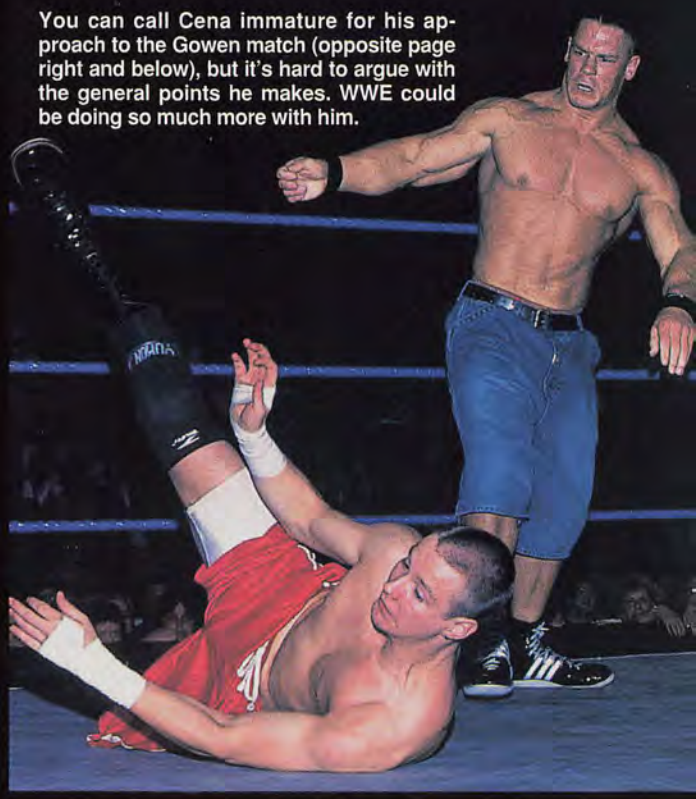
The fact that he was put in a televised match against the one-legged Gowen particularly infuriated Cena.

"Gowen's nothing but a novelty act, like a midget or a chick," Cena declared. "So he's living his dream. Am I supposed to be impressed that he can balance on one leg? That's great for him, but don't waste my time by making me wrestle him. I wrestle for titles, not in comedy matches."

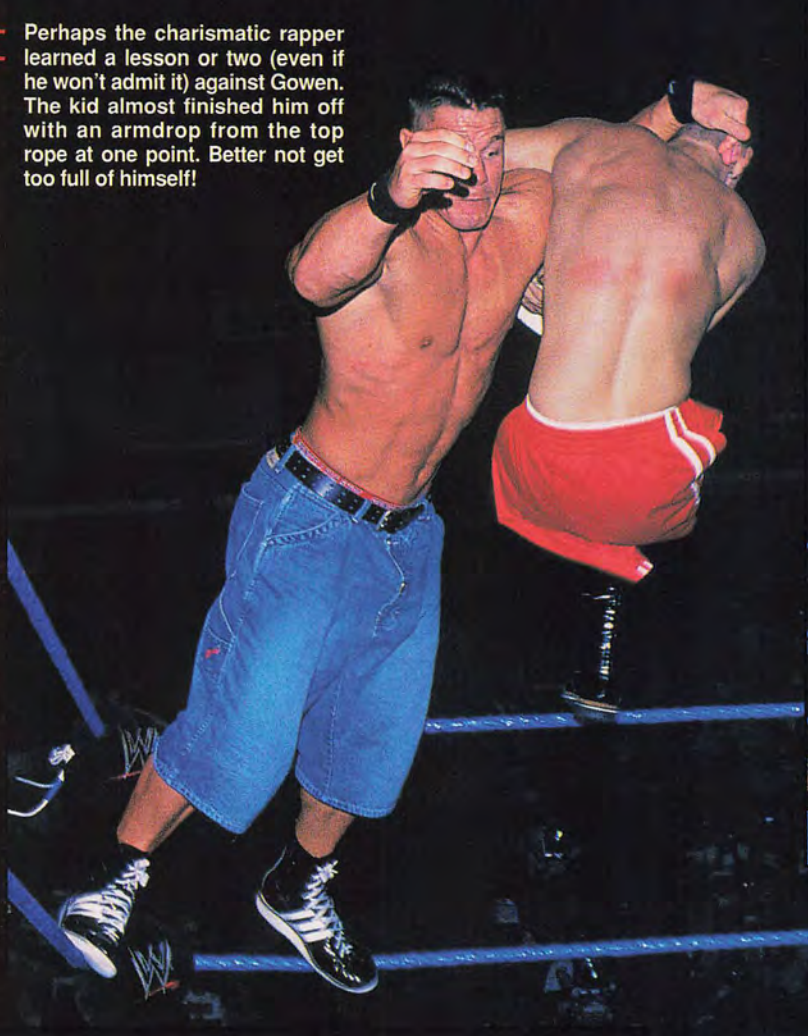
"I can't say I agree with what Cena's saying, because Zach Gowen's probably got more guts in his pinkie finger than Cena's got in his entire body, but I can see where Cena's coming from," said *Smackdown* color commentator Tazz. "You're taking a hell of a risk when you wrestle Gowen. If you win, you're a bully because you just beat up a skinny kid with one leg. And if you lose, then you just lost to a skinny kid with one leg. It's a no-win situation any way you slice it for somebody like Cena. Of course, that's no reason to be unprofessional about it. Crying and complaining about it shows me that Cena just isn't mature enough to survive on the main event level yet."

"Gowen's nothing but a novelty act, like a midget or a chick. So he's living his dream. Am I supposed to be impressed that he can balance on one leg? That's great for him, but don't waste my time by making me wrestle him. I wrestle for titles, not in comedy matches."

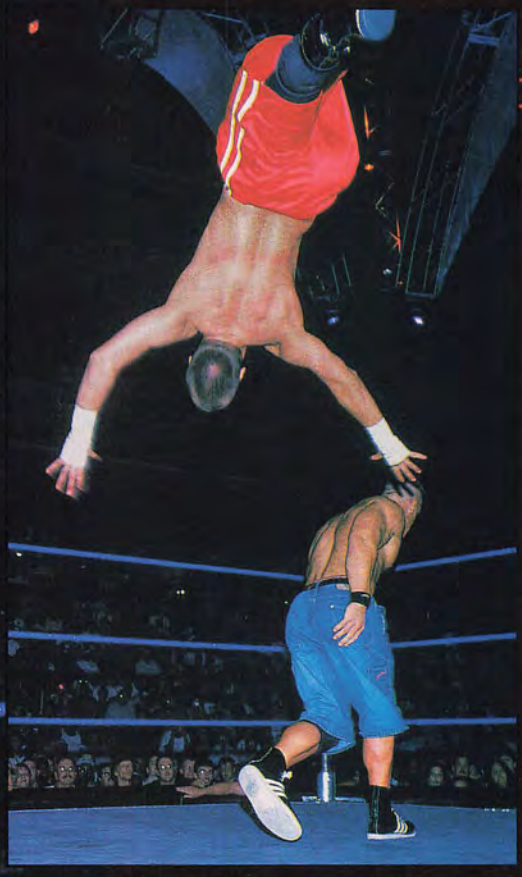
To his credit, Gowen wrestled an impressive match against Cena, surprising Cena with a quick offensive attack. Gowen's flurry antagonized Cena more than weakened him, and Cena started pounding on Gowen in the corner. Rather than quickly put Gowen away with his FU finisher, Cena climbed the ropes and attempted to deliver the maneuver from the top. Gowen managed to reverse the slam into an armdrop and nearly



You can call Cena immature for his approach to the Gowen match (opposite page right and below), but it's hard to argue with the general points he makes. WWE could be doing so much more with him.



Perhaps the charismatic rapper learned a lesson or two (even if he won't admit it) against Gowen. The kid almost finished him off with an armdrop from the top rope at one point. Better not get too full of himself!



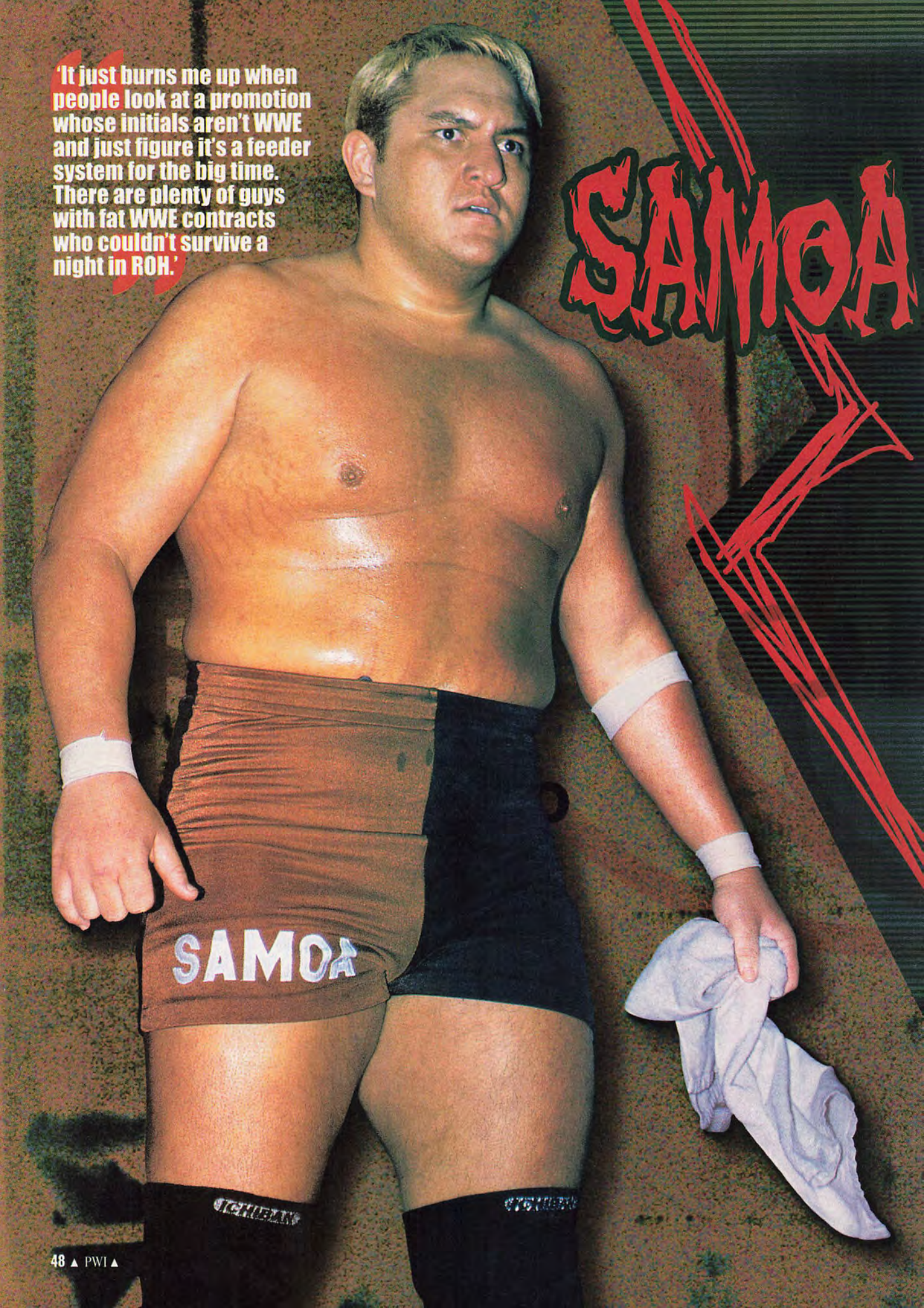
Cena was clever and alert enough to anticipate Gowen's moonsault and steer clear of it. Is he clever enough to find a way to convince WWE to give him more shots at the Smackdown title?

scored an upset pinfall. A red-faced Cena barely kicked out and hit his finisher for the pin.

For all his ranting and raving, Cena still came dangerously close to losing this televised "handicap" match. Ironically, even in victory, the match may have further damaged Cena's chances of procuring another title shot, especially compared to how easily Lesnar—a "true contender"—dominated Gowen two weeks later.

Cena, though, maintains that he is overdue for a shot at Angle's title.

"They put me in the ring with the cripple, and I beat him. What else do you want me to do?" Cena said. "Maybe I'm gonna have to start getting a little more violent. Maybe I'm gonna have to lay off the fun and games and mess some folks up real bad to get what I deserve. You thought what Lesnar did to Gowen was bad? What till you see what happens to the next sap that gets in my way! Don't say I haven't warned everybody!" □


'It just burns me up when people look at a promotion whose initials aren't WWE and just figure it's a feeder system for the big time. There are plenty of guys with fat WWE contracts who couldn't survive a night in ROH.'
SAMOA
SAMOA

Photos by Joe Zanolle & Timothy A. Walker

JOE'S WARNING:

Don't ever speak dishonorably about Ring of Honor!

By Dan Murphy

NOT A DAY goes by that he doesn't hear the question. That doesn't stop him from getting a little angry about it.

"So, Samoa Joe, when do you expect to make the move to WWE? Have they talked to you yet?"

Of course, there are several variations of the question: When will you get a developmental deal? How do you think you'd fare against WWE competition? Do you think you'd want to team or feud with Rikishi?

The reigning Ring of Honor champion just doesn't want to talk about WWE, and it's not because he thinks idle talk is going to jinx his chances of getting called up to the "big leagues." Frankly, Samoa Joe has no intention of leaving Ring of Honor—at least not in the foreseeable future.

"I just don't get it," said Joe when recently asked a version of the WWE question. "My goal is not necessarily to become a WWE wrestler. My goal is to be the best I can be in the place we're I'm at. You can't wrestle a match keeping one eye on your opponent and one eye in the stands looking for WWE talent scouts. I'm happy here in Ring of Honor, wrestling against the guys I think are the top wrestlers in the business.

Does this photo tell a story? Does the frenzied look in ROH champ Samoa Joe's eyes as he charges at new WWE developmental prospect Paul London suggest he was sending London a message in his last ROH match?

There's no place else I'd rather be. As far as I'm concerned, this *is* the big leagues."

Samoa Joe's dedication to the Philadelphia-based ROH promotion has been interpreted by some critics as complacency. After all, the powerful Samoan is one of the top independent prospects in wrestling, a business in which most guys would shove their grandmother down a flight of stairs for even a WWE tryout. Known for his stiff, roughhouse, strong style, the big Samoan isn't afraid to fling his 270-plus pounds over the top rope at unsuspecting opponents. Thanks to his size, style, and aerial abilities, the Samoan stands out among most other independent wrestlers.

But when an indy competitor claims he has little or no interest in working for WWE, some people just assume there's something wrong with him. Is he content to be one of the bigger fish in the small pond of ROH? Does he lack the confidence needed to compete against the sport's elite on the grandest of stages? Deep down, is he afraid to test himself against the sport's big boys? Who wouldn't want a contract and the worldwide exposure that comes with being a WWE superstar?

"I don't even want to talk about WWE," Joe said. "That would show disrespect to Ring of Honor and everyone who is working their butts off to make this a truly great company. *'I'm the Ring of Honor champion and I'd sell my soul to wrestle for WWE.'* Even if that's the way I felt—which it isn't—I'd be stupid to say it.

"It's just that at this stage of my career, WWE simply doesn't fit into my plans. Who knows, somewhere down the road, it might happen. But even if that day never comes, I'll have no regrets. I have always conducted myself with honor."

Honor. In essence, that's what Samoa Joe's decision is all about. As Ring of Honor champion, Samoa Joe sees himself as the standard-bearer for the promotion that emphasizes no-frills athletic competition over storyline-based booking. As long as he is associated with Ring of Honor, Joe feels compelled to do what he can to help the young promotion survive, even if that means putting his own career on the back burner.

In a way, Samoa Joe's situation is reminiscent of that of Tommy Dreamer during ECW's formative years. Dreamer believed in the product ECW was putting out with such passion that he repeatedly sacrificed his own body—and career ambitions—for the good of Paul Heyman's company. Whenever ECW needed that spark—a wicked bump, an unforgettable promo, a bloody match—Dreamer was happy to be there to make it happen.

Ring of Honor fans appreciate Samoa Joe's hard-hitting suplexes (top) and power bombs (above), and he appreciates the fact that his style is appreciated by fans of ROH. That's why he has no plans to leave.

American Dragon gets trapped in a Samoa Joe STF during an ROH match. We wonder if Joe ever thought he'd be considered to be, in a way, the Tommy Dreamer of Ring of Honor.

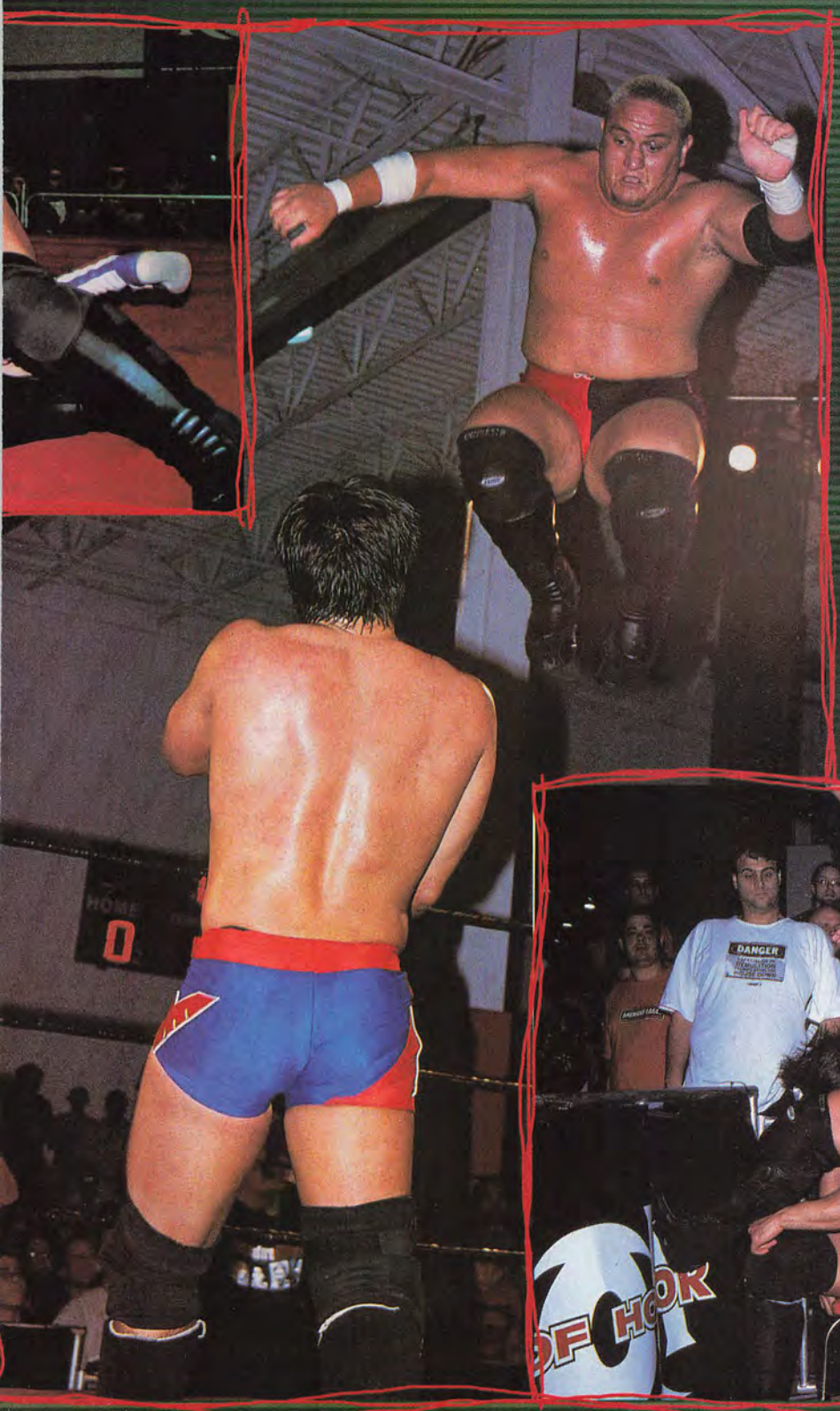
Witness what happened at the Ring of Honor show on July 19 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It was the ultra-popular Paul London's final ROH appearance before heading to Ohio Valley Wrestling to begin his career as a WWE developmental wrestler. A lot of fans who jammed into the Rexplex on that warm, sticky night were there to bid farewell to London on what was sure to be an emotional night. Samoa Joe just happened to be his opponent. And although the match itself was overshadowed by London's post-match speech to the crowd and his fellow wrestlers (a speech in which he professed nothing but respect for Ring of Honor), Joe will never forget the finish.

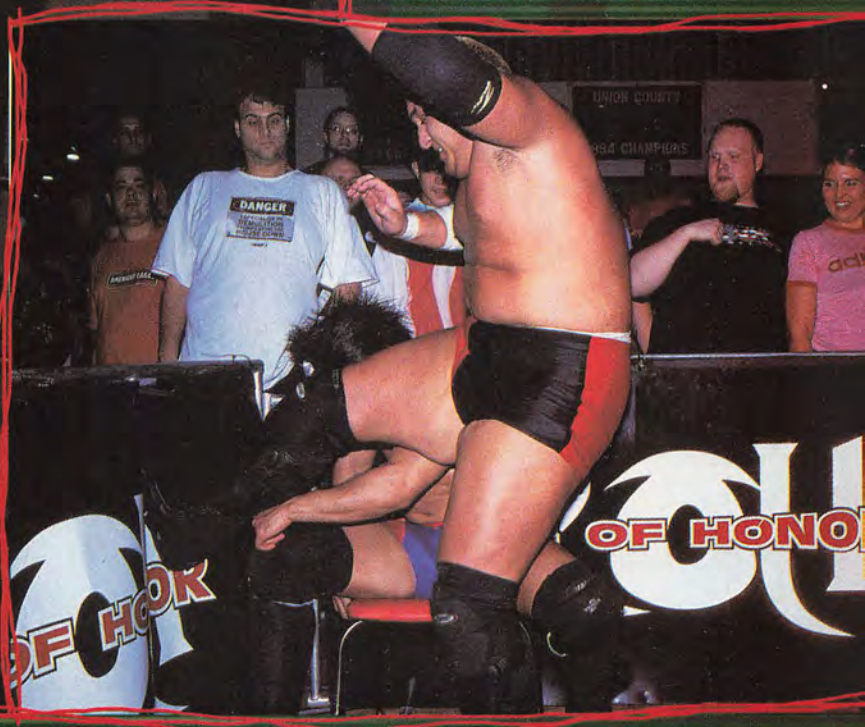
It ended with him choking out London ... with him rendering London unconscious ... with the referee stopping the match and raising *his* hand in victory. While Joe is as happy for London and bears him no personal ill will, he had to be satisfied with his dominant performance against a WWE superstar-in-the-making. It was a victory for Joe and a victory for the promotion he so proudly represents.

Still, he doesn't think he's being particularly noble. He just wants credit to go where he feels it's due.

"It just burns me up when people look at a promotion whose initials aren't WWE and just figure it's a feeder system for the big time," Joe replied. "There are plenty of guys with fat WWE contracts who couldn't survive a night in ROH. With A.J. Styles, myself, Raven, and everyone else on this roster, we have some of the top wrestlers in the world here. When ignorant people try to slough ROH off as just another fly-by-night independent, it really ticks me off. And it motivates me."

Joe is willing to accept the personal swipes and even allegations that he's afraid of WWE competition. He knows that simply is not true. Let the critics say what they will. But when it comes to the reputation of Ring of Honor, Joe doesn't want to hear anyone talk out of school. □





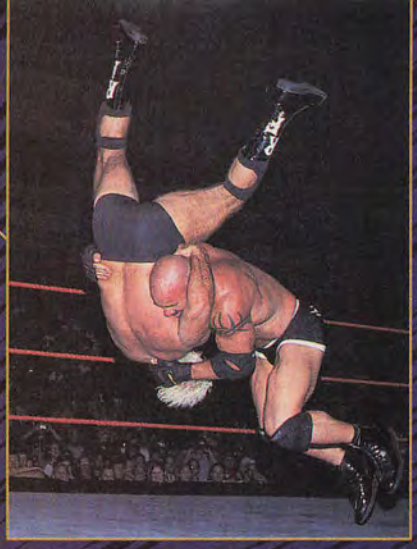
One of Joe's powerful kicks sent a wobbly London reeling outside the ring (below), and his aerial assault kept London off-balance inside in their July match (left). Though many believe London left for the "big leagues" after this match was over, don't try to convince Joe of that.

"Goldberg, like any wrestling fan, is very familiar with Flair's in-ring style. A couple of matches are all it takes. Besides, Goldberg had battled Flair a few times in WCW, and didn't think there was anything else he needed to know about wrestling the 16-time world champion ... Wrong!"

EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS:
HOW WRESTLING FLAIR

Photos by James McAfee

Bill Goldberg wasn't necessarily surprised by the pain that Ric Flair's figure-four was causing him. He was surprised Flair lasted long enough against him to be in position to lock on the hold!



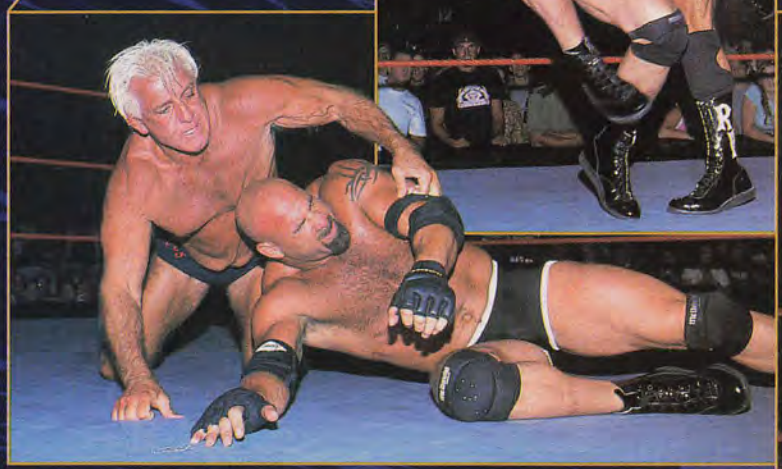
The victory that Goldberg fully expected to pick up against Flair did come eventually ... but it sure didn't come as easily as "Da Man" expected.

CHANGED GOLDBERG FOREVER

By Harry Burkett

WHEN BILL GOLDBERG issued an open invitation for Evolution to face him in the ring, and Ric Flair was the only member to accept the challenge, "Da Man" probably figured that was the equivalent of having the night off. Just from a physical standpoint, Goldberg is three inches taller, at least 40 pounds heavier, and 17 years younger. Also, Goldberg assumed this was a night he could go on cruise control by trading a few chops, flipping Flair over the turnbuckles, and catching the "Nature

Everyone knows Flair is no match for Goldberg physically at this stage of his career. However, he is as mentally sharp and clever as ever. He was smart enough to keep after Goldberg when he was weakened (below right) and to try to keep him off his feet (bottom right).



Boy" on the top rope and tossing him with an easy overhead slam.

Goldberg, like any wrestling fan, is very familiar with Flair's in-ring style. A couple of matches are all it takes. Besides, Goldberg had battled Flair a few times in WCW, and didn't think there was anything else he needed to know about wrestling the 16-time world champion ... Wrong!

"I was definitely wrong about that," Goldberg admitted. "I've learned that in this business, the secret to greatness is being able to master the basics. It's not about how many different things you know, it's about doing the basics very, very well. I like to think that I can heat up a crowd with a jackhammer and spear, more so than some guys do with huracanranas, front or side saltos, Michinoku drivers, whatever. Personally, I'm able to do a lot more than what I show in the ring, but guys like Hulk Hogan, people I respect, have given me some good advice: Do what works and do it well. That's something I've always known, but Flair proved it to me all over again."

Only about an hour after Flair accepted Goldberg's challenge on July 28, Raw champion Triple-H battled "Da Man" in a dark match following that edition of *Raw*. Triple-H suffered a severely strained groin only a few minutes into that encounter. With the Raw champ on the sidelines during the weeks leading up to SummerSlam, Goldberg's upcoming match against Flair became more important than ever.

Goldberg's first WWE encounter with Flair occurred on the August 4 edition of *Raw* ... and ended prematurely when Evolution teammate Randy Orton attacked "Da Man" with a steel chair. That prompted Shawn Michaels, Chris Jericho, and Kevin Nash to get involved in the ensuing melee. As a result, co-GM Steve Austin announced that Triple-H's Raw title defense against Goldberg at SummerSlam would be changed to an "Elimination Chamber" match also involving Orton, Michaels, Jericho, and Nash.

Because his first bout with Flair ended with outside interference, Goldberg prepared for a no-disqualification rematch against "Naitch" on August 11. Co-GM Eric Bischoff allowed Orton to serve as the special referee. Still, Goldberg began the match quickly, going into steamroller mode at the outset. Even more of a factor than Orton's biased officiating and Flair's brass knuckles was the "Nature Boy's" ability to counter Goldberg's powerful offense with the simplest moves: the thumb to the eye, the low blow, and the chop block to the back of the knee. The ratio of expelled energy vs. in-ring effectiveness was definitely in Flair's favor. He was wrestling intelligently if not cleanly.

Then came the climax to your typical Flair match: the figure-four leglock. The 30-year veteran grapevined Goldberg's legs and applied the pressure. Goldberg screamed in agony, proving that Flair's classic finisher was every bit as effective in 2003 as it had been in 1983. Rick Steamboat, Goldberg—it didn't matter. The only differences were the time and venue. The crowd ate it up all the same.

Goldberg finally scrambled to reach the ropes, but heel ref Orton kicked his hand away, enabling Flair to pull him back into the middle of the ring. Goldberg escaped Flair's clutches and, though his legs were still quite wobbly, prepared to spear the "Nature

Boy." But Orton stepped in front of Flair and absorbed the impact. Moments later, Michaels ran into the ring and nailed a dazed Orton with a superkick as Goldberg executed the jackhammer on Flair. Michaels dragged the unconscious Orton to where Goldberg had Flair in a pinning predicament, and used Orton's limp right hand to make the three-count.

Goldberg didn't expect his match against Flair to be so demanding. He was reminded to never underestimate the value of his opponent.

"Oh my God, how many times does the 'Nature Boy' have to take these young studs to school?" asked Flair, excitedly. "It's not about the big muscles, it's not about a mean face, tattoos, none of that stuff. It's about being willing to bleed, sweat, and pay the price, puttin' it all on the line. I don't care if that means kickin' ass or showin' it! Goldberg's gonna have to be more like Triple-H, willing to do whatever it takes. I'll give the man his due. I think Goldberg gets it, but he has to prove a lot more to me, Evolution, and the wrestling world."

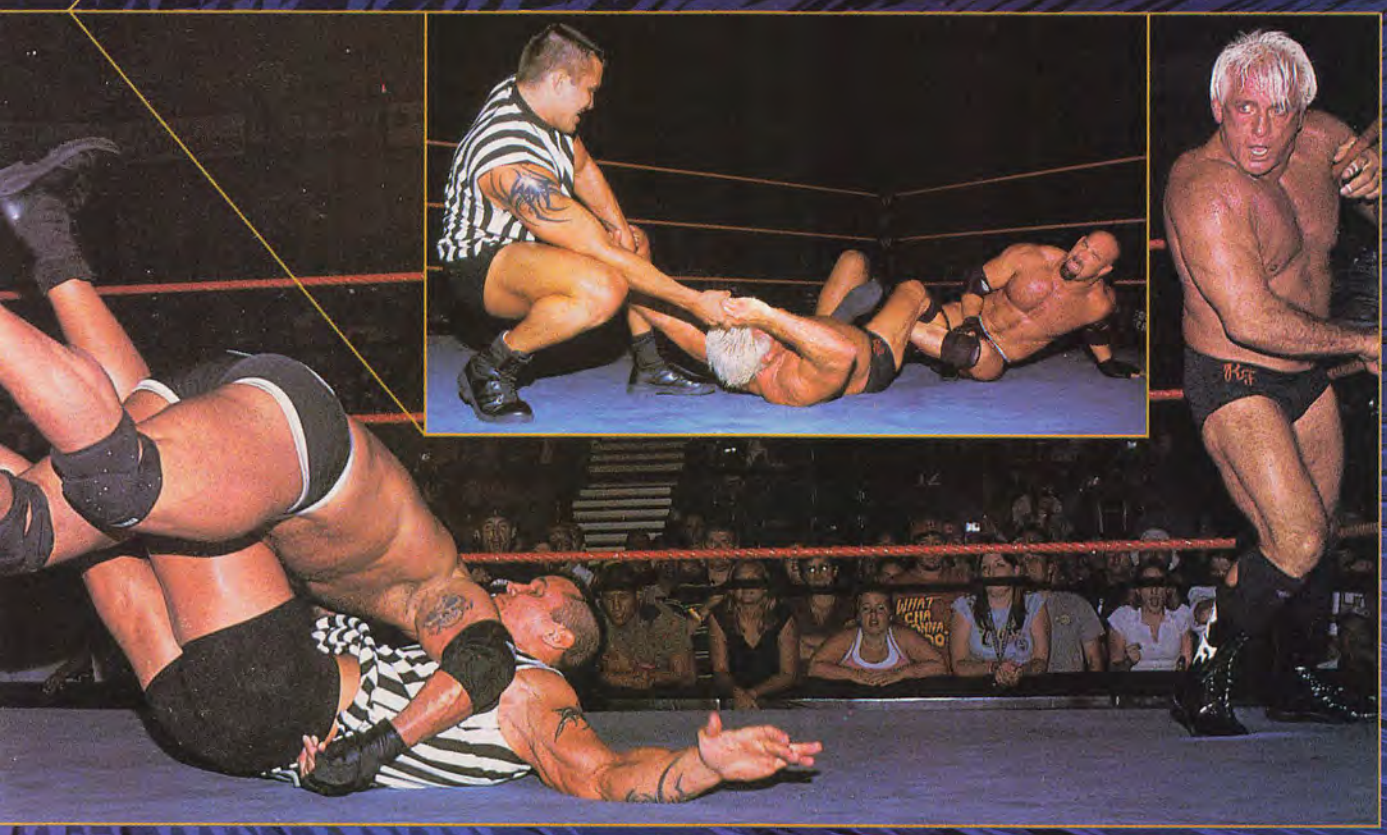
It's a typical story that makes for good drama in wrestling and all of sports: a peaking superstar facing a veteran in the twilight of his career. Sometimes the result is a ridiculous mismatch. Other times, the flavor of the month learns a valuable lesson.

Just a casual look through *PWI's* archives proves this is true. Old-timers might remember how a young upstart named Ric Flair was determined to become the sport's only "Nature Boy" by defeating the original, Buddy Rogers, who was a good 15 years past his prime. Flair beat Rogers in a 1979 match, but the blood and gore signified that it was no easy task.

In 1986, *PWI* ran another "legends at the crossroads" story detailing a showdown between Southern champion Lex Luger, whom many considered the next Hulk Hogan at the time, and Harley Race, whose paunch had reached disturbing proportions. Luger, who had ripped through all of the competition in Florida since his debut, wasn't able to fare any better than a double-DQ decision against the eight-time former NWA World champion.

Another ironic twist to the theme was Race substituting for his charge, Big Van Vader, against Ric Flair in the early-1990s. Ten years after their last major feud for the NWA title, Flair swore that Race—even though he was only a manager at the time—was as crafty and dangerous as ever. Undoubtedly, The Rock could say the same about Hulk Hogan, Chris Jericho the same about Shawn Michaels, and Brock Lesnar the same about The Undertaker. It is wrestling's circle of life.

Like so many others, Goldberg has learned an age-old lesson. Why does it always come as a surprise? □

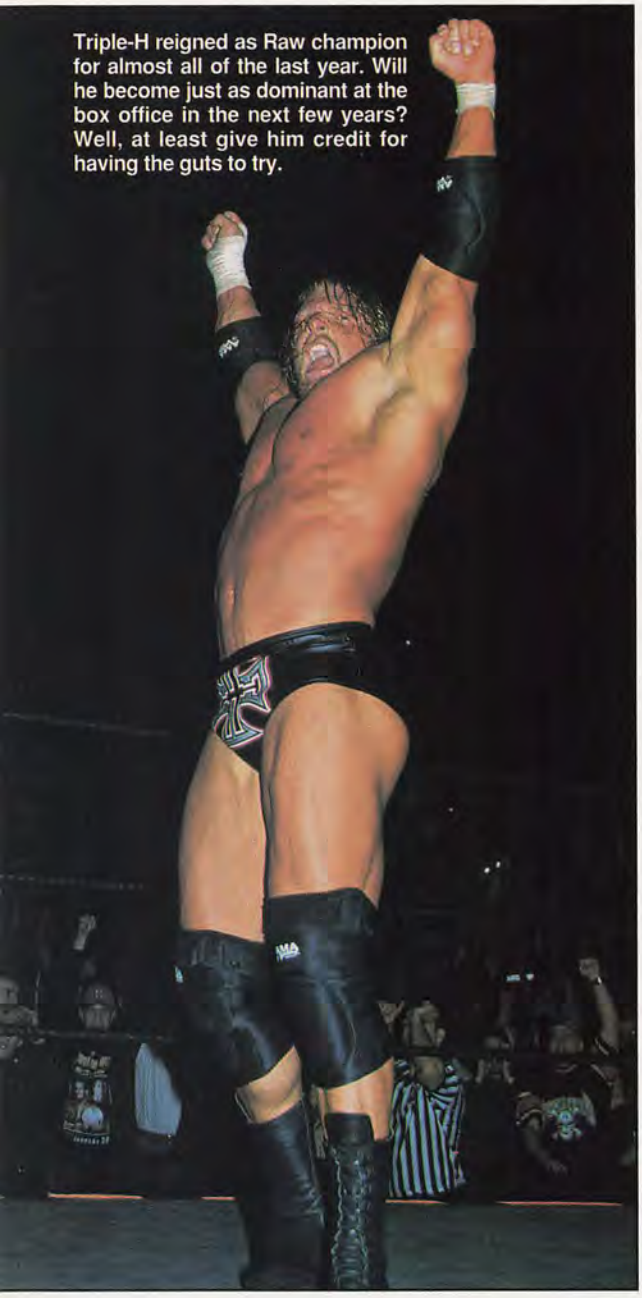


Not surprisingly, Randy Orton, as a very biased referee, made Goldberg's mission that much harder (inset). But even after Orton took a Goldberg spear (below), a win for "Da Man" was not a sure thing. Flair is that dangerous at all times.

the business page

By Harry Burkett

Big screen, big dreams ... Triple-H has already challenged The Rock in the wrestling ring, but he now seeks to gain box office superiority over "The Great One," whose latest movie, *The Rundown* (previously titled *Helldorado)*, premiered nationwide on September 26. According to the *Hollywood Reporter,* Triple-H will play a bad guy, a role that comes naturally to him, in the upcoming motion picture *Blade: Trinity.* Wesley Snipes has the lead part in the film, which details the exploits of a vampire hunter. Directed by David Goyer, this will be the third installment in a series of movies about that character.



Triple-H reigned as Raw champion for almost all of the last year. Will he become just as dominant at the box office in the next few years? Well, at least give him credit for having the guts to try.

Perhaps even more interesting to wrestling fans will be the Raw champ's starring role in *Jornada Del Muerte* (Journey of Death), the first release from WWE Productions. John Milius, the screenwriter for the classic 1979 flick *Apocalypse Now,* wrote the script with Triple-H specifically in mind. It is said that the film will have the feel of a Western, but is set in the modern-day American Southwest. The plot involves motorcycle gangs, drug trafficking, and broken codes of honor.

Triple-H isn't the only wrestler who will be busy with movie projects. Kevin Nash will have a supporting role in *The Punisher,* which might explain why he was willing to lose his big, sexy hair. Likewise, Roddy Piper will return to the action-adventure genre in *Code Black.* Former *CHIPS* star Erik Estrada headlines the movie, and William Shatner will direct. Even Nathan Jones has spent time in Mexico working on the upcoming *Troy,* which stars Brad Pitt. Maybe some of the stuntmen will volunteer to wrestle Jones in WWE!

Is it NWA-TNA or Columbia House? NWA-TNA has experimented with various business models and different ways to gain exposure among wrestling fans. But no effort has been as bold as its pay-per-view on September 10. Why? Panda Energy and the Jarretts slashed the $9.95 fee for that night, charging only one cent for the PPV.

Fans who paid their hard-earned penny to see the event definitely got their money's worth. The pay-per-view was a highlight program that included some of the best showdowns in TNA's 15-month history.

Among the marquee bouts were NWA champion A.J. Styles defending against D-Lo Brown, Jeff Jarrett and Sting vs. Styles and Syxx-Pac, Styles' NWA title victory in a three-way over Jarrett and Raven, Jarrett's NWA title defense against Raven, Chris Harris and James Storm's NWA tag team title win over Christopher Daniels and Elix Skipper, and Michael Shane's X title victory over Frankie Kazarian and Chris Sabin in the first-ever "Ultimate X" match. Don West and Mike Tenay introduced each bout.

It will be interesting to see whether TNA's gutsy move hooked enough new fans to pay off with higher buy rates in the future.

Smoke cigars, drink beer, and invest wisely ... While Bradshaw definitely endorses all three, he was emphasizing money management during his recent publicity tour to promote his new book, *Have More Money Now: A Common Sense Approach To Financial Management.* Bradshaw appeared on numerous media outlets, including CNBC and

the Fox News Channel.

In the book, Bradshaw tackles several topics: setting financial goals, living within your means, differentiating good debt from bad debt, and managing your stock portfolio. The no-nonsense Bradshaw is able to translate complex money matters into everyday language. Bradshaw admits that he wasted a lot of money earlier in his life, and learned how to manage his finances the hard way. Even if you're not interested in Wall Street, Bradshaw blends enough wrestling stories into the narrative to keep your attention.

Above all, Bradshaw urges patience and the importance of long-term planning. In that sense, *Have More Money Later* might have been a more apt title.

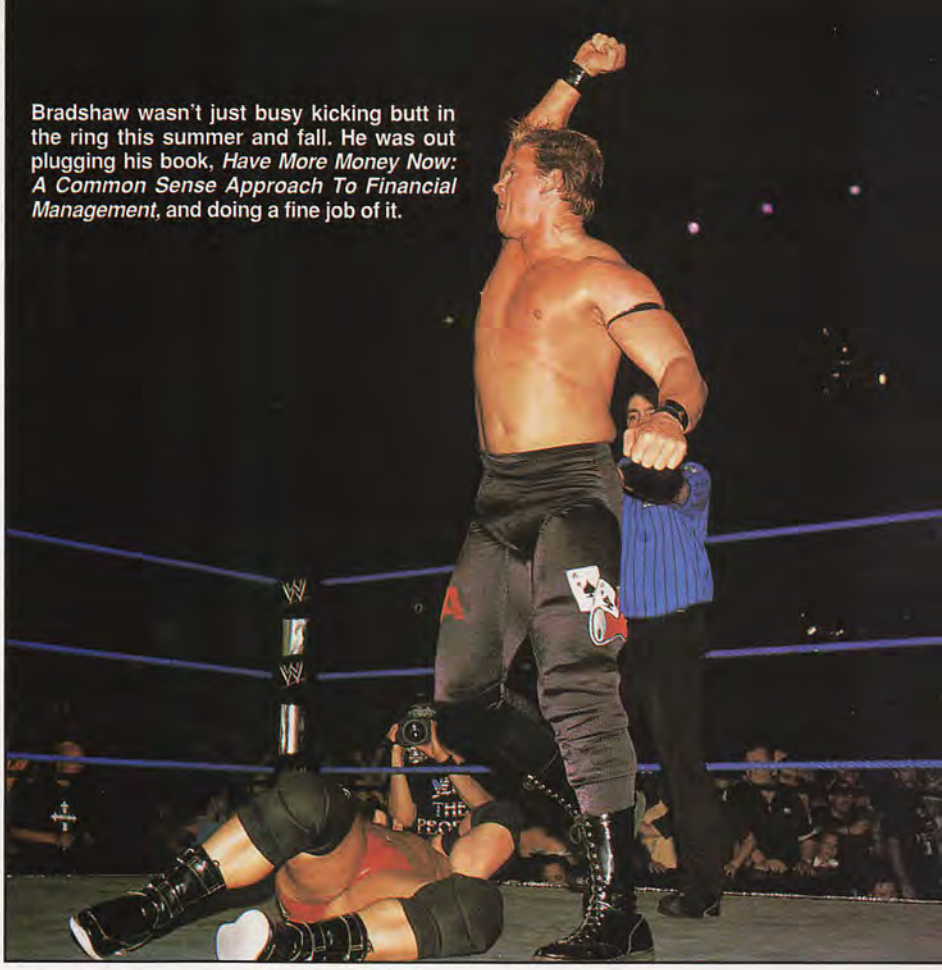
And, no, playing cards against a drunken Faarooq is not a wise investment strategy.

Who was that masked man?

There is yet another twist in the saga involving The Great Sasuke, his mask, and the Iwate Prefectural Assembly in Japan. Regular readers of "The Business Page" might recall our previous installments, detailing the Michinoku Pro star's refusal to unmask after his election to the Assembly. Proclaimed Sasuke: "This is my face ... I won support from voters with this face, and to take it off would be breaking promises."

Members of the opposition, the Liberal Democratic Party, introduced a measure banning the wearing of masks during assembly sessions. Sasuke's Liberal Party narrowly voted down the bill. Now, according to Kyodo News, Sasuke must present an identification pass showing his real face before entering Assembly sessions. The committee overseeing security matters unanimously agreed that Sasuke would have to unmask for the ID photo, but he will still be allowed to wear his mask throughout the building.

However, no one explained how a photo of Sasuke's bare face would help security guards identify the masked wrestler.



Bradshaw wasn't just busy kicking butt in the ring this summer and fall. He was out plugging his book, *Have More Money Now: A Common Sense Approach To Financial Management*, and doing a fine job of it.

WWE Stockwatch

(For the period of August 1 to September 15, 2003)

45-Day High: 10.85 on September 15
45-Day Low: 9.15 on August 7
52-Week High: 11.07 on June 26 and 27, 2003
52-Week Low: 6.76 on October 16, 2002

After operating in the red for several months, WWE was able to post a $2.7-million profit for its first fiscal quarter of the year. The McMahons were pleasantly surprised by a higher-than-expected number of pay-per-view buys for Judgment Day and Bad Blood.

While gross revenue fell from $85.4-million to $74.7-million, compared to the same three-month period last year, WWE executives pointed out that Vengeance was not included in the first fiscal quarter, as it was in 2002. Vengeance garnered about 275,000 buys, a decent number, which will contribute $2.6-million to the next quarter.

"Our cost-cutting measures initiated in 2003 produced better profitability than we planned," said CEO Linda McMahon. "I am also excited that our first Raw and Smackdown separately branded pay-per-view events were well-received ... We now expect EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization) for fiscal 2004 to be between $42.5-million and $47.5-million, an increase of $2.5-million."

In other news, former American Movie Classics executive Tom Barreca was appointed the senior vice president of WWE Enterprises, a new division in charge of the company's video library, which includes classic WCW, ECW, and AWA footage.

TV breakdown

Week beginning August 4

Raw (TNN): 3.9
Smackdown (UPN): 3.0
Velocity (TNN): 0.7
Confidential (TNN): 0.7
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 0.8

Analysis: Could it be called a guilty pleasure? While the broad majority of journalists and fans giving their opinions on the Kane-Shane McMahon storyline claimed to hate the angle for its lack of logic, it seemed to boost ratings for *Raw.* The overrun for this week was a respectable 4.5, which was still down from the previous weeks. Heading toward SummerSlam 2003, the Kurt Angle-Brock Lesnar rivalry caused the Zach Gowen angle to fade. *Smackdown's* numbers also maintained their steady level.

Week beginning August 11

Raw (Spike TV): 3.9
Smackdown (UPN): 3.5
Velocity (Spike TV): 0.9
Confidential (Spike TV): 0.8
Sunday Night Heat (Spike TV): 1.3

Analysis: The Kane-Shane angle, along with Bill Goldberg's feud with Evolution, helped *Raw* maintain its 3.9 rating this week, while *Smackdown* experienced an impressive half-point boost, most likely due to Brock Lesnar's heel turn against champion Kurt Angle inside a steel cage the previous week. This momentum carried over to the weekend shows, notably *Velocity* and *Sunday Night Heat.* Overall, WWE television ratings were trending slightly upward headed toward SummerSlam.

Week beginning August 18

Raw (Spike TV): 4.0
Smackdown (UPN): 3.3
Velocity (Spike TV): 0.7
Confidential (Spike TV): 0.6
Sunday Night Heat (Spike TV): 1.0

Analysis: Viewers again seemed to reward *Raw's* bizarre storyline twists, including Eric Bischoff making lewd advances toward Linda McMahon in her Connecticut home and Rosey accidentally killing a cat during a silly "superhero in training" skit. After facing Ric Flair for two straight weeks in the main event, Bill Goldberg took on another Evolution member, Randy Orton. WWE Smackdown champ Kurt Angle defeated The Big Show in the main event for that brand, and *Confidential* continued to struggle due to summer repeats.

Week beginning August 25

Raw (Spike TV): 4.2
Smackdown (UPN): 2.6
Velocity (Spike TV): 0.6
Confidential (Spike TV): 0.6
Sunday Night Heat (Spike TV): 0.9

Analysis: *Raw* whipped *Smackdown* this week, gaining two-tenths of a point as *Smackdown* dropped by seven-tenths. Much of that *Smackdown* dropoff, however, could be attributed to pre-emptions in major markets. Viewers must have known something big would happen when Shane McMahon battled Chris Jericho to a no-contest. The program ended with McMahon throwing Kane into a dumpster engulfed in flames. The Undertaker beat Brock Lesnar and Big Show in a three-way main event on *Smackdown.* In some ways, the Smackdown brand seemed to be coasting after SummerSlam.

Week beginning September 1

Raw (Spike TV): 4.4
Smackdown (UPN): 3.7
Velocity (Spike TV): 0.6
Confidential (Spike TV): 0.6
Sunday Night Heat (Spike TV): 0.9

Analysis: The Labor Day holiday helped *Raw* score a very encouraging 4.4 overall rating. Bill Goldberg, Shawn Michaels, and Maven defeated WWE Raw champion Triple-H, Ric Flair, and Randy Orton in the main event. Brock Lesnar continued to terrorize on *Smackdown,* interfering in Kurt Angle's title defense against The Undertaker and attacking Zach Gowen again. Lesnar's loss to Smackdown champ Angle at SummerSlam actually helped their feud keep its momentum.

Week beginning September 8

Raw (Spike TV): 3.7
Smackdown (UPN): 3.5
Velocity (Spike TV): 0.9
Confidential (Spike TV): 0.6
Sunday Night Heat (Spike TV): 0.9

Analysis: Were you ready for some football? Apparently, a lot of viewers were, as the season premiere of *Monday Night Football* probably lured a sizeable portion of the audience from *Raw,* despite the show starting with Kane vs. Rob Van Dam in a steel cage. *MNF* won't necessarily remain such a powerful draw for the rest of the season, however. *Smackdown* was only 90 minutes this week, providing a strong lead-in for *The Mullets* during the final half-hour of its usual time slot. *The Mullets,* by the way, earned a 2.4 rating.

>> True Life Story: Mick Foley >> TNA Brass Thanking Vince? >> Q & A: Benjamin & Haas
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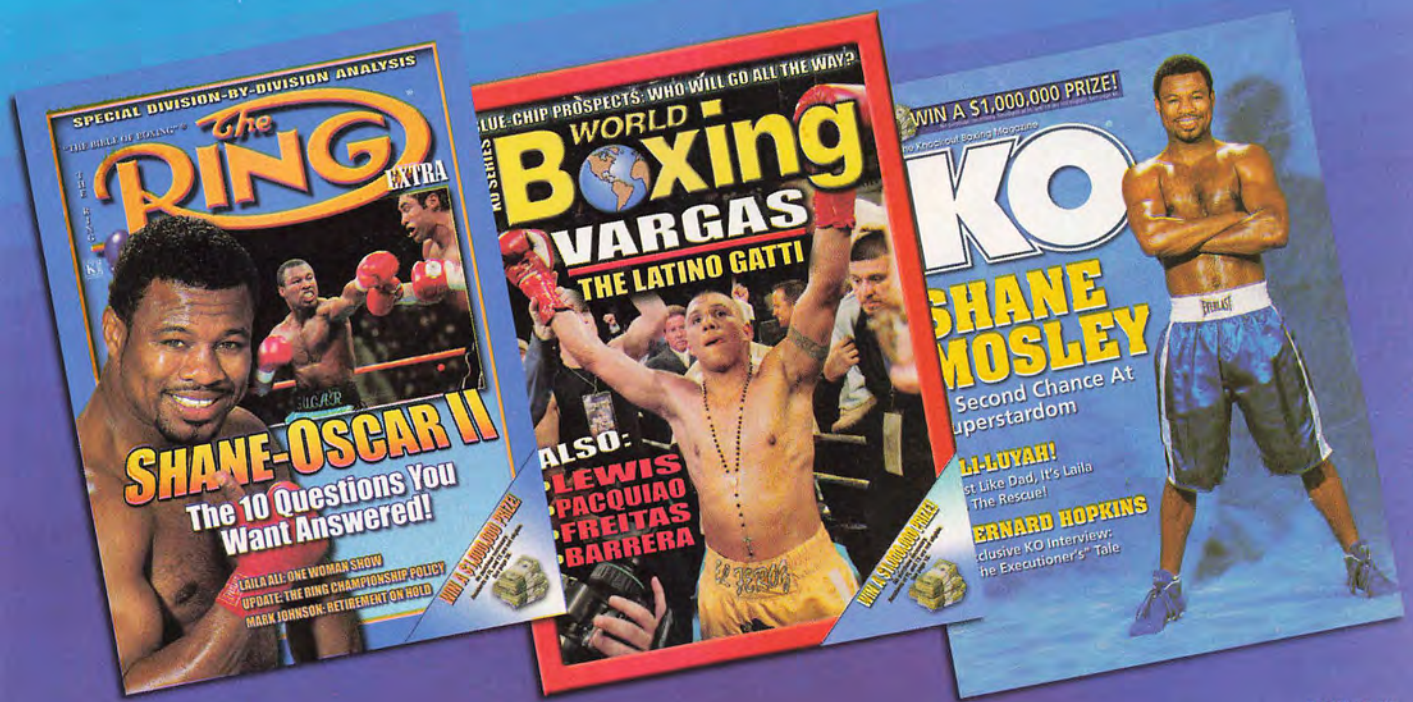

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the steel cage

By Liz Hunter

A REVOLUTION IN EVOLUTION. Triple-H is the Faarooq of 2003. No, I'm not suggesting that the WWE Raw champion has been tossing back Budweisers and wasting his money on poker games. I'm referring to Faarooq's role as leader of The Nation of Domination about five years ago. The Rock, a hot young heel at the time, was a cocky junior member of The Nation, and he persuaded fellow members Mark Henry and The Godfather to dump Faarooq and make him the new leader.

Although he's content to accept advice from Ric Flair (and Triple-H) now, Randy Orton will look to take over Evolution sooner rather than later, according to Liz Hunter. She expects Orton to try to do something similar to what a young Rock did five years ago.

It was The Rock's run as a heel, and his takeover of The Nation, that led to him becoming a main-eventer. Randy Orton is following in The Rock's footsteps. He has already anointed himself "The Legend Killer," attacking Mick Foley, taking on Shawn Michaels, and using the RKO on the 80-year-old Fabulous Moolah.

Who's next? It has to be Raw champion Triple-H. And the time is ripe for Orton. Triple-H's groin injury will probably require more rehabilitation. He and Stephanie McMahon were preparing for their wedding at press time. He also has two movie projects slated for the near future. Undoubtedly, Orton will consolidate his power base within Evolution during Helmsley's absence. He is already trying to recruit Maven.

And what about Ric Flair? Above all, Flair likes security, and I can easily see him forsaking Triple-H to keep his spot in Evolution. Or Orton could dump Flair, too. If Orton likes to kill legends, wouldn't Flair be the ultimate target? Fans still have affection for Flair, and humiliating the "Nature Boy" would make Orton an even stronger heel.

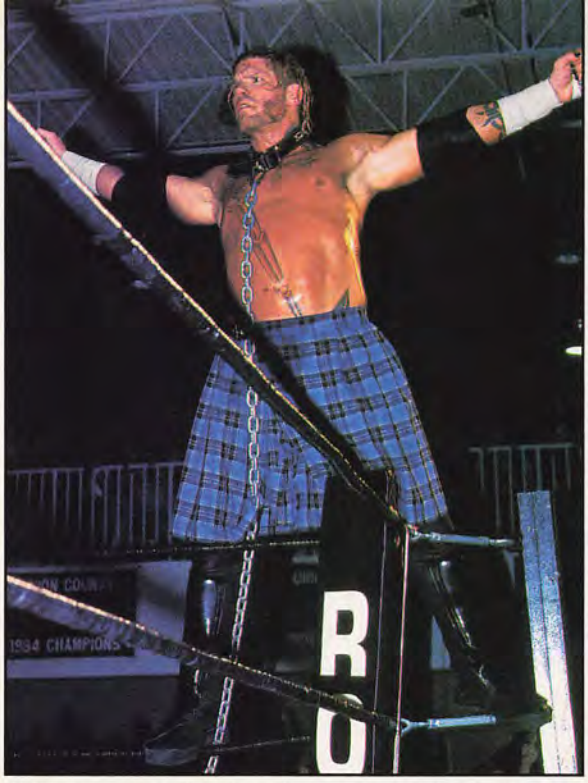
Bill Goldberg may have defeated Triple-H for the Raw title at Unforgiven, but the way I see it, Orton was the big winner at that pay-per-view. Triple-H will be too preoccupied by marriage and rehab to keep a firm grip on the title if he does regain it. Goldberg is too volatile to be a long-term player in WWE. And management has shown little confidence in either Rob Van Dam or Booker T as consistent main-eventers.

That leaves Randy Orton, "Game Killer."

RAVEN'S NEW HAVEN. As someone who was sorry that WWE released Raven earlier in the year, I am thrilled to see the brooding superstar thriving in NWA-TNA. On the August 27 TNA pay-per-view, Raven gave NWA champion A.J. Styles the toughest challenge of his title reign so far. Both men employed various styles of offense during the match, ranging from brawling and hardcore to high-flying and mat grappling.

The blood began to spill less than five minutes into the bout and, of course, Vince Russo tried to interfere on Styles' behalf in the early going. The highlight of the match came when Raven tried to use a drop toehold to send Styles into a steel chair, but the champion jumped off the chair and onto the top rope, and launched into a springboard. Within seconds, Raven grabbed the chair and smashed Styles while he was still in mid-air. Unfortunately, James Mitchell's thugs, Sinn and Slash, along with Shane Douglas, all attacked Raven, who fell victim to the Styles clash and the three-count.

When Raven was a color commentator on *Sunday Night Heat,* he



WWE probably still thinks it made the right decision by releasing Raven early in the year, though it's becoming increasingly harder to see the company's reasoning as he routinely delivers more great matches (not just brawls) in NWA-TNA.

always impressed me with his great wit. Against Styles, Raven reminded me that he's also a great wrestler.

TENACIOUS K? *Kerry Von Erich lives. At press time, he is listed in fair condition at the Baylor Medical Center in Denton, Texas, having suffered serious, career-threatening injuries as the result of a motorcycle accident ... Doctors refused to speculate to the extent of Von Erich's injury and whether he will be able to return to the ring. It is indeed possible that Kerry will walk with a limp for the rest of his life and quite probable that his wrestling skills will be limited.*

That was the assessment of Dave Rosenbaum, who wrote "Tragedy Strikes The Von Erichs—Again: Is Kerry Von Erich's Career Over?" in the October 1986 issue of *The Wrestler.* Kerry had that accident on June 4, 1986, and, unfortunately, reinjured his already mangled right foot during his comeback match against Brian Adias in December of that same year. Sadly, it was necessary to amputate Kerry's foot. Nearly a year later, Kerry returned to the ring with a prosthesis, and kept news of the amputation from the public and a lot of insiders.

As close as I was to the family, Kerry never revealed his secret to me. But there were always rumors of the amputation, and even a reputed incident in which his boot and prosthesis accidentally came off in the ring. Kerry was fighting personal demons before his motorcycle crash, and a new addiction to painkillers sent him into a downward spiral, leading to his suicide in 1993.

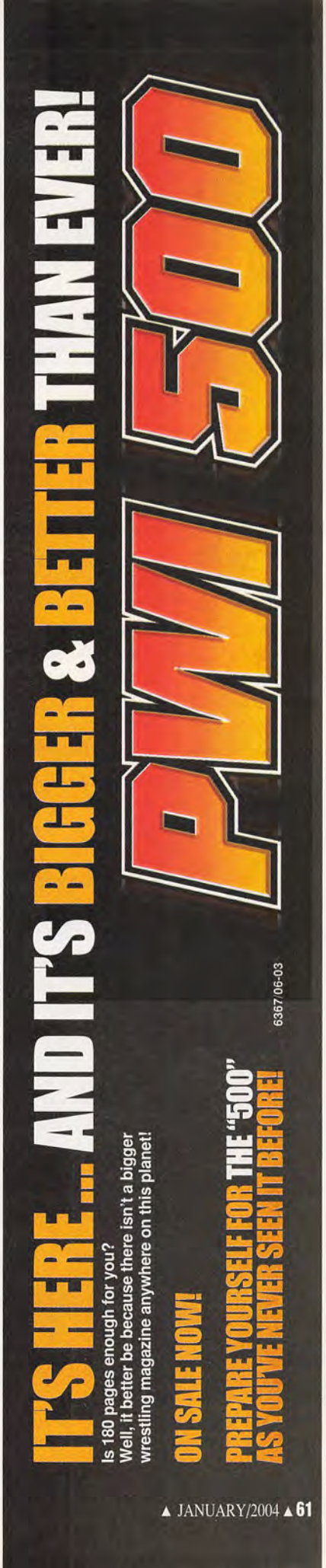
I often think of Kerry when I watch Zach Gowen in the ring. Gowen's disability, a full leg amputation, is far more severe—and he obviously doesn't have much choice but to disclose his handicap. But Zach is handling his circumstances much better than Kerry did. Poor Kerry feared he would no longer be marketable if fans found out the truth. If Kerry had talked about his disability openly, he would have enjoyed the support of the fans and probably the entire wrestling community.

Kerry's story could have been inspirational, like Zach's, not a tragedy. □

strange list of the month

FIVE WAYS RANDY ORTON CAN EMBARRASS MORE LEGENDS

1. Stomp The Iron Sheik with a pair of curl-toed boots
2. Do a better Elvis impersonation than The Honky Tonk Man
3. Shave Vince McMahon's head
4. Recruit David Flair for Evolution
5. Bash his own father, Bob Orton Jr., with a phony cast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win, lose, or draw

By Harry Burkett

AFTER REACHING THE milestone of my 60th "Win, Lose, Or Draw" column, I thought this would be an appropriate time to reflect upon what has been written, discussed, and reported within these two pages over the past five years. Yes, this exercise is a tad self-indulgent, but so is the act of writing a column.

Consider this edition of "WLD" to be like one of those sitcom highlight shows, maybe *The Jeffersons,* as when Louise and her maid, Florence, reminisced about old times over a cup of coffee (showing clips from previous seasons, and saving producers the expense of doing an actual episode). Here are some passages that jumped out at me as I sat on the floor, skimming through each column I had written over the past half-decade.

Best prediction (January 2000): "I predict wrestlers will compete with artificial limbs. Men retiring at the age of 33 due to injuries, which happened to Shawn Michaels, will be an extreme rarity. Surgeons will be able to implant a new spinal column or maybe a brand-new set of knees, better than the originals. Daredevils like Mankind, by age 40, will be competing with new arms and legs."

Considering Dr. Hae-Dong Jho's miracle work with Kurt Angle, and the amazing performances of Zach Gowen, the trend is definitely going in this direction.

Quintessential old school column (May 2000): "Tom Brandi called to inform me that the Mafia—in the form of Vinnie Gambini's Little Italy clique—was infiltrating the Independent Pro Wrestling Alliance, a Virginia-based promotion. After I slipped the obligatory $20 bribe to one of his bodyguards, Gambini issued this warning to me: 'There's a nice little river. It's called the Potomac. Maybe you'd like to go with my boys on a sightseeing trip on the Potomac ... and you can see the fishes up close if you like.'"

Hey, I had to pay homage to one of my all-time favorite columnists, Gary Morgenstein, who, in 1979, detailed how Bobby Heenan, Nick Bockwinkel, and Bob Orton Jr. chased him for five hours and ran him off the road because he had secret information pertaining to Bockwinkel's upcoming AWA World title defense against Dusty Rhodes. That action adventure appeared in two installments in *Inside Wrestling,* complete with a cliffhanger in between. At least my Vinnie Gambini story was a merciful one-parter.

Most hated target (February 2002): My words from that issue speak for themselves. "I did hate Ronnie Garvin. I hated the fact that he was over 40 years old and wearing a spiky haircut with the little rat tail at the end. I hated the way he used to embarrass Ric Flair. I hated the way he had to jump in the air to hit someone in the nose. I hated that silly hands of stone finisher in which he would just haul off and knock somebody out with one punch. Why were 10 punches from Sting needed to cause Flair to fall on his nose when it only took one punch from Garvin to knock him out?"

Enough said.

Although he always attempts to be objective—and 16 years have passed since it happened—Harry Burkett is still angry over the fact that Ronnie Garvin (shown with promoter Jim Crockett) got to be NWA World champion. It's nothing personal, but he still doesn't like Garvin, either.

Lou Thesz and Burkett review a list of names that were included in our special devoted to the greatest wrestlers of the 20th century. Harry's column about spending a day picking the brain of arguably the greatest wrestler of all-time made his favorites list.

Most frequent target (September 2000, October 2000, and February 2001): Long-time readers probably believe I have a grudge against Vince Russo. My problem with Vinny Ru is that so many of his storylines are far too complicated for their own good. I specifically cited the incident in which Bill Goldberg stalked Russo for two hours, kidnapped him, and drove him to a freshly dug hole in the New Mexico desert. Bret Hart emerged out of nowhere to lend a hand, but instead smacked Goldberg in the back of the head with a shovel. He then yelled at Goldberg for causing the head injury that ended his career. Gary Morgenstein must have helped out with that one.

I did give Russo credit for a quick wit and clever concepts, such as Mike Jones/Virgil/Vincent/Vince/Curly Bill announcing that his new name would be "Shane" (as in McMahon), making Jim Duggan a janitor, and openly proclaiming that *Thunder* "sucks." Russo's weakness is his overall storytelling. But I'll stop right there. I've handed over the official position of "chief Russo basher" to Liz Hunter.

Favorite interview (March 2002): I discovered Ethel Johnson while researching a *PWI Women Of Wrestling* special. She is an African-American woman who earned her living as a pro wrestler from the early-1950s to the late-1970s. That was a remarkable story, considering that Johnson was active during the years of segregation in the South, where she was often forced to ride in separate cars or sleep in spare bedrooms at boarding houses instead of comfortable hotel rooms. Sometimes, death threats or bigoted attitudes made it impossible for her to appear in front of crowds.

"When I came in, there weren't any black girls," noted Johnson. "There was a lot of resistance to me. Even some of the other girls wouldn't travel with me. I stuck in there because I liked the business. Sure, it was tough, but each place was different ... Despite all of that, I enjoyed wrestling and entertaining the people."

Johnson must be mighty proud of Shaniqua.

The statement I most regret (April 2002): When discussing *PWI's* Achievement Awards, I marveled at how Chris Adams, who turned fan favorite after being blinded by Gino Hernandez, edged out Magnum T.A. for the Most Inspirational Wrestler of the Year Award in 1986. As it turned out, many readers had already cast their ballots to meet the November deadline, before Magnum's career-ending auto accident took place.

So I offered this handy advice for all aspirants to the Inspirational Wrestler Award: "If you're going to wrap your Porsche around a telephone pole, make sure to do it earlier in the year." Several readers let me know that I had crossed the line into bad taste. Looking back on it, they were probably right. Sorry about that, "Maggie Mae."

Most inspirational story (August 2002): This would have to be my interview with Superstar Graham, who was in desperate need of a liver transplant. Steroid abuse and Hepatitis C had taken their toll on his body, but Graham remained amazingly upbeat. The former WWWF World champion discussed the importance of his wife, friends, and faith.

Said Graham: "Valerie has been with me through all the surgeries and ordeals ... I couldn't make it without her. Support from my friends is a big help, too. Sometimes I get calls from Jesse Ventura, Terry Funk, or Steve Strong. And faith is very important. Without faith in Christ and my belief in Him, I would have no hope. That's what keeps me motivated and keeps me going."

Fortunately, Graham finally received a transplant and now claims to have "the healthiest liver in wrestling."

All-around favorite column (June 2000): This was the result of my trip to Norfolk, Virginia, where I spent the day with Lou Thesz. The six-time former NWA World champion helped me examine a list of 100 names we had compiled for a special issue titled *Wrestling: The Best Of The 20th Century.* From Farmer Burns to Bret Hart, Thesz had met them all. His insights were invaluable, and he was a true gentleman, too.

So those are my personal highlights over the past five years. As always, thanks for checking out what I have to say. □

the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

I'M WORRIED ABOUT A.J. Styles. That probably sounds pretty sanctimonious, I realize, but it's true.

Somewhere along the line, Styles became the "in" wrestler among practically every fan that thinks he knows the difference between a tope and a plancha, a *katahajime* and a crossface chicken wing. Styles has the kind of street credibility for which Triple-H would give his good quadriceps. He's been embraced by the ever-judgmental online (and print) wrestling media to the point at which your typical wrestling columnist could give you a good 400 words on why A.J.'s sweat smells like potpourri.

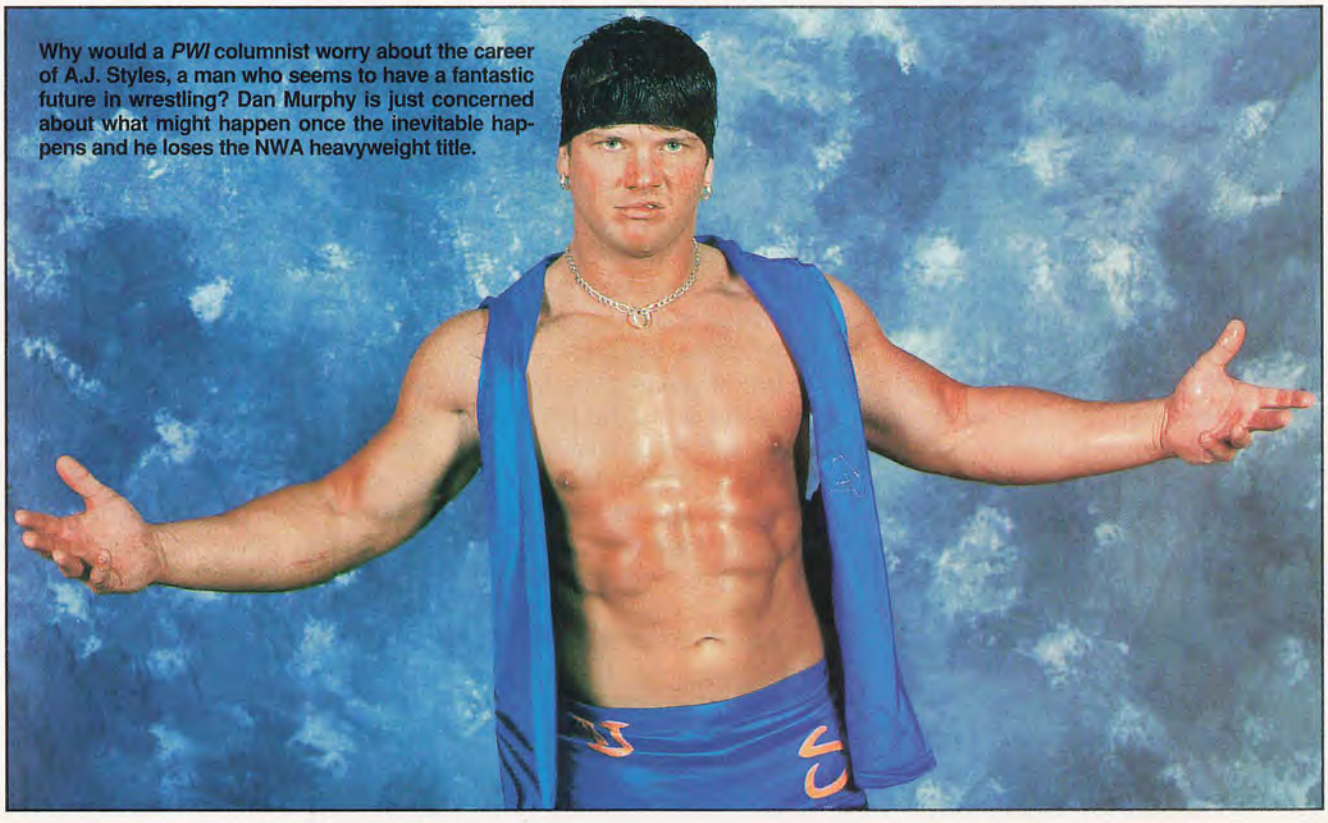
The reigning NWA champion can do no wrong—that's all there is to it. In a recent issue of *PWI's* sister publication *The Wrestler,* my colleague Will Welsh asserted that Styles is the most significant NWA champ in the past decade and that 30 years from now, his name won't look out of place beside Ric Flair, Lou Thesz, and Harley Race in the NWA title lineage. In a recent issue of another one of *PWI's* sister publications *Inside Wrestling,* Dave Lenker (my boss) gave Styles his props for being a deserving champion at the top of his game, not a defector from another federation or an undeserving schlub with a booking committee behind him. Even the always-hard-to-please Brandi Mankiewicz has heaped praise upon Styles (though she did recently bust on him for being physically unable to "look mean" even if his life depended on it).

And I agree with Will, Dave, and Brandi, as well as several other columnists who have spoken out in favor of Styles. The kid is a heck of a talent. He's a joy to watch in the ring. And on the few occasions I've spoken with him, he's come across as a genuine, intelligent, and likable individual. I think he's loaded with natural talent, has a good head on his shoulders, and *should* have a long, fantastic career.

But my last name *is* Murphy, and Murphy's Law states that if anything can go wrong, it will, usually at the worst possible moment. I could bust out several incidents from my own life that illustrate that little axiom perfectly (the senior prom comes to mind).

The point is, right now, A.J. Styles has the world in his hands. So what does he do with it?

What happens when Styles drops the NWA title? With Vince Russo involved in the mix, titles have a way of



Why would a *PWI* columnist worry about the career of A.J. Styles, a man who seems to have a fantastic future in wrestling? Dan Murphy is just concerned about what might happen once the inevitable happens and he loses the NWA heavyweight title.

WWE did show interest in Styles (shown against The Hurricane in a 2002 dark match) in the past, but he chose not to accept a developmental deal. The Murph wonders if he will "need" WWE at some point in the future ... and whether WWE would ever give a real shot at superstardom.

switching hands quickly, and there's a good chance A.J. will be an ex-NWA champion by the time this magazine hits the newsstands. Would that loss take some of the luster off his name and reputation? Styles is widely regarded as one of wrestling's can't-miss stars of the future. Does that reputation take a hit if he drops the title to a former WWE mid-carder like D-Lo Brown or Justin Credible? What if he falls out of contention for the NWA title for a period of several months? If you pull Styles away from the likes of Jeff Jarrett and Raven and stick him with the Sonny Siakis, Glenn Gilbertis, and Johnny Swingers of TNA, do you still have a breakout star on your hands? Or does Styles become another Jerry Lynn—a man who looked so close to breaking out and becoming a contender, only to slip back into the unforgiving abyss of semi-obscurity and mediocrity?

Here's another question: Does Styles need WWE to reach his full potential? There's no question that WWE is by far the biggest, most influential promotion in the world. If Styles never gets a break there, can he still rightly be considered a superstar?

Just a couple of years ago, WWE came knocking on Styles' door, and the Georgia homebody very respectfully said, "Thanks, but no thanks." At the time he said the pay that came with a developmental deal wasn't enough for him to uproot his family. He justified that decision by using the logic, "If they want me today, think how much they'll want me down the road." That might be true, and it might not be. Vince McMahon doesn't always respond to perceived snubs gracefully. I can envision Vince signing Styles just to steal him away from TNA and then sticking him on *Velocity* or *Sunday Night Heat,* never giving him the opportunity to showcase his skills on one of WWE's primary TV shows.

As I see it, the next few months are going to be a critical period for A.J. Styles. If he drops the title, he must look good in defeat. If he slips from the title picture (just as Ron Killings did after he dropped that title), he's going to have to go out there and steal the show night after night. He's going to have to prove there's more depth to A.J. Styles than the novelty of him sneaking past Jarrett and Raven for the title.

I talked to Styles recently and asked him about what he saw down the road.

"I'm the champ and I'm enjoying it," he said in typical understatement. "I love the respect you get with the title. I'm having a good time."

But what happens when it comes crashing down? Is Styles ready for that unavoidable eventuality?

"All I'm worried about is paying the bills and paying off my mortgage," he replied. "Every time I go out there, I concentrate on giving the fans what they want to see, and they get what they paid for. I wrestle the same way, regardless of whether or not I have the title. I'll take things as they come, and let the chips fall where they may."

The chips are going to fall. I just hope they don't knock over the house of cards that might be supporting A.J. Styles' career. □

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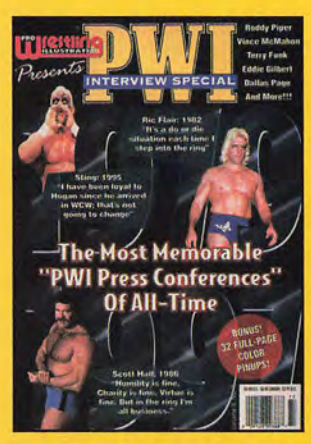

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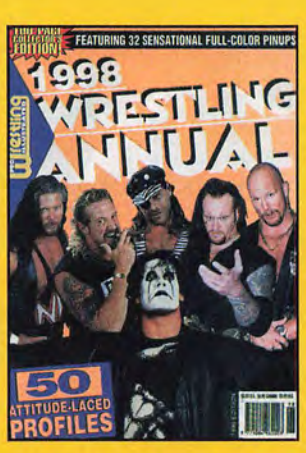

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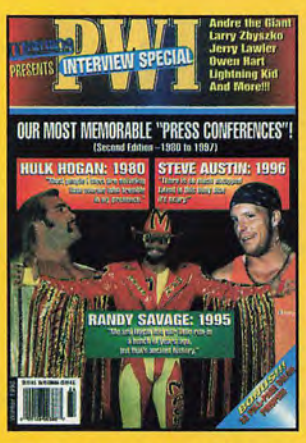

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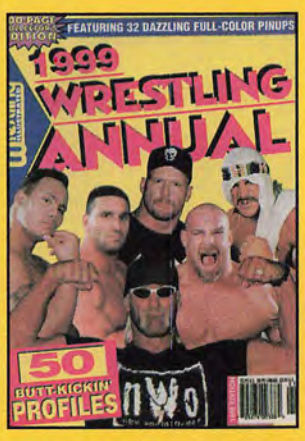

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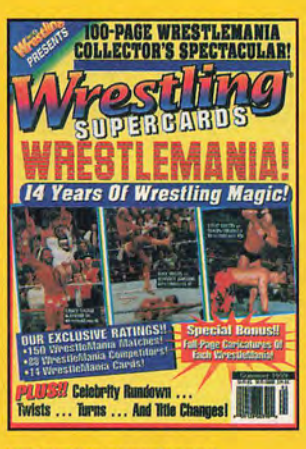

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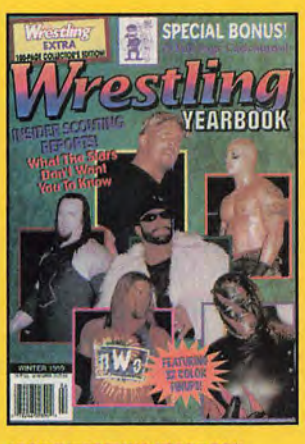

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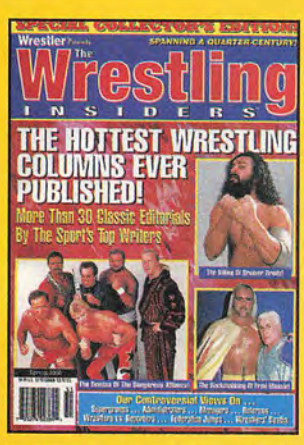
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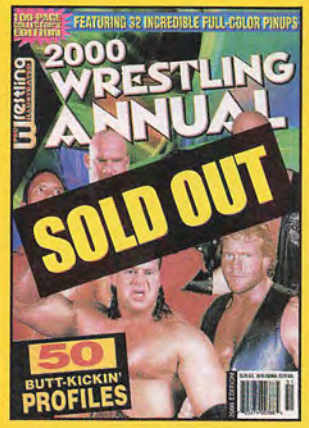

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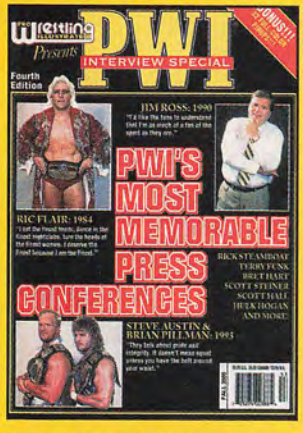

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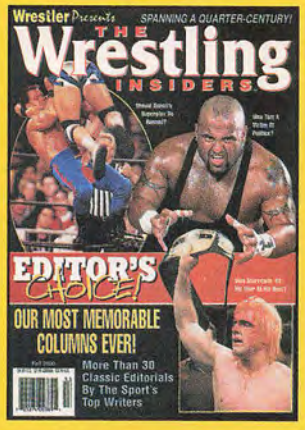
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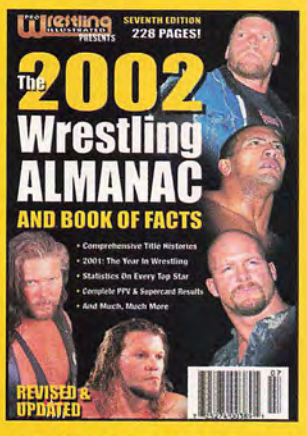
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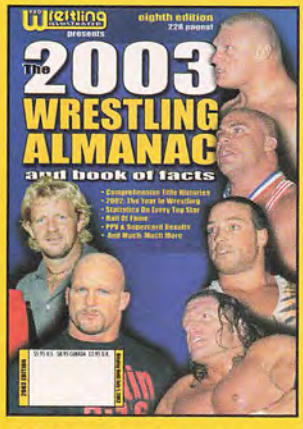

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THE Wrestling ANALYST

SPANKY

Years Pro: 4
Size: 5'8", 212
"PWI 500" Listings: 2003—43
2002—171
2001—208
Titles: NWA Zero-One junior heavyweight
Memphis Championship Wrestling light heavyweight
MCW Southern tag team
Texas Wrestling Alliance light heavyweight
Texas Wrestling Alliance tag team
***PWI* Awards:** None

[[the numbers]]

Offense (8.5): Spanky is an aerial specialist. He learned the Lucha Libre style at the Shawn Michaels Wrestling Academy, which explains why he is able to maximize the impact of his small frame through bodypresses, armdrags, and other high-risk, full-contact moves. He developed the more technical maneuvers in his repertoire while in Japan's Zero-One.

Defense (7.5): Too often, Spanky misjudges high-flying moves in WWE and winds up eating canvas. His ring style is geared toward capitalizing on his opponents' mistakes and finding holes in their offense. Instead, he should utilize counter-wrestling to use his opponents' offensive moves to his advantage. Even at his size, he should focus on mat grappling a bit more.

Experience (8.5): His first matches occurred in the Texas Wrestling Alliance, and he moved to Memphis upon signing a WWE developmental contract. After his release from WWE's developmental program in 2001, Spanky competed in the Heartland Wrestling Association, Ultimate Pro Wrestling, and Ring of Honor. He also reigned as Zero-One's first junior heavyweight champ. He has gotten around and learned a lot in a short period of time.

Conditioning (7.5): Spanky doesn't have an intimidating physique, but it should serve him well in WWE's cruiserweight ranks. Unfortunately, he's spending too much time battling heavyweights on *Velocity* and on house shows. Spanky is also pitted against larger foes when he appears on *Smackdown.* Bulking up a bit would help Spanky's cause.

Science (8.0): While Spanky learned the basics from Michaels and Rudy Boy Gonzales, his mat training would have been more thorough at the Hart Dungeon or under Dean Malenko. But he did learn the importance of precision timing in San Antonio, which is probably just as important in today's WWE. He improved his mat skills greatly in Ring of Honor.

Stamina (9.0): Although Spanky's WWE matches rarely last longer than seven or eight minutes, he had the opportunity to test his stamina on numerous occasions in Zero-One and Ring of Honor. His semifinal loss to Chance Beckett at the 2003 Super 8 didn't necessarily bring his physical stamina into question, but it did raise concerns about his will to win.

Power (6.5): Spanky matched his opponents hold-for-hold when he routinely faced cruiserweights such as American Dragon and Christopher Daniels during his first couple of years in the business. He doesn't have the power to utilize a hold-for-hold approach against WWE heavyweights. On Smackdown shows, he must employ a cat-and-mouse game. You saw what happened when he wasn't able to do that against Brock Lesnar.

Speed (9.5): From bouncing off the ropes to scampering up the turnbuckles, Spanky uses his remarkable agility to gain full command of the ring. Only Rey Misterio Jr. is better at incorporating the ring into an offensive weapon in WWE. Nevertheless, Spanky wastes too much energy with his breakneck sprints down the rampway during ring entrances.

Ability To Absorb Punishment (8.0): Spanky is small compared to almost all Smackdown superstars and lacks the musculature of even some cruiserweights. He can be overpowered and overwhelmed in any given match. Yet Spanky is not easily intimidated and is willing to fight for his spot in WWE, even if that means facing monsters like Brock Lesnar again and again.

Quality Of Opposition (8.0): Spanky has been relegated mostly to *Velocity* in recent months, especially since Zach Gowen took his role as Smackdown's number-one underdog. The good news is that Spanky is usually featured in *Velocity* main events and has fared well against more experienced mid-card foes such as Bill DeMott, Kanyon, and Nunzio.

① **It wouldn't be a bad idea for Spanky to do a little more in WWE of what he did against Chris Cage in the quarterfinals of the 2003 Super 8, which is remain grounded and try to outwrestle, outmaneuver, and outthink opponents on the mat.**

Repertoire: Spanky used the frog splash as an effective finishing move earlier in his career, and then perfected the beautiful sliced bread II. If you're wondering, that means his new finisher, an acid drop (Dudley dog) he turns into a neckbreaker, is "the best thing since sliced bread." Against opponents his own size, he likes to mix it up with chops and kicks. His attack is a fairly versatile one.

Strengths: Spanky is oddly charismatic, and his cutie-pie good looks make him popular with teenage girls. His persona in Zero-One was based on Leonardo DiCaprio, and Japanese females swear the resemblance is uncanny. His offbeat personality, which led him to go streaking during a *Smackdown* taping earlier this year, is also appealing to fans. It's only a matter of time before he wears his Mad Hatter hat regularly on *Smackdown* or *Velocity*.

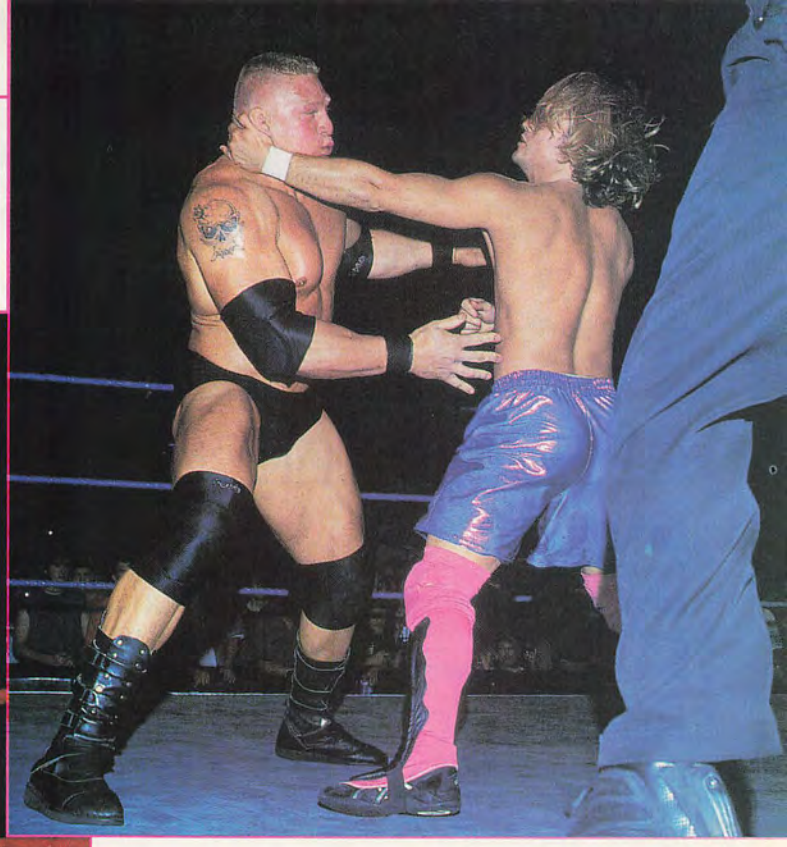
Weaknesses: Will Spanky's strengths eventually begin working against him? Teenage girls like Spanky's cutesy persona, but will that alienate male fans and affect whatever little drawing power he might have? At some point, Spanky will have to establish some character depth, even if that means turning heel. He could follow the paths of other heartthrobs such as Chris Jericho, Matt Hardy, and Edge. Or he could end up teaming with Mad Mikey in TNA.

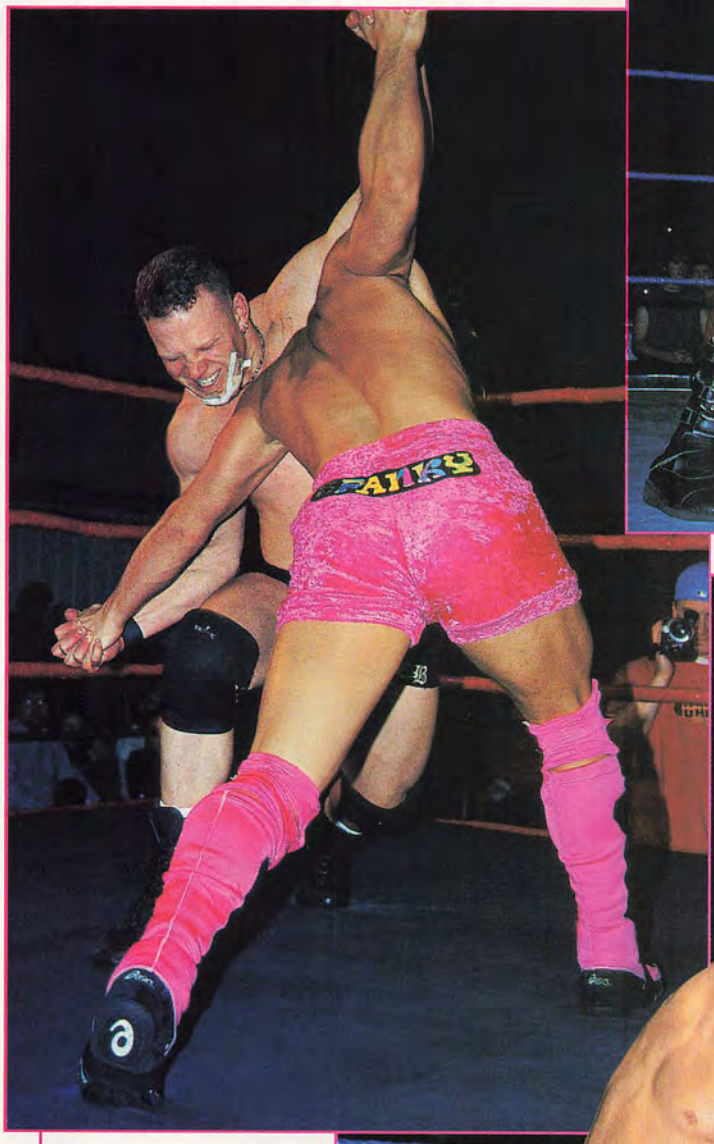
Defining Career Moment: At a Ring of Honor show on April 27, 2002, five Shawn Michaels/Rudy Boy Gonzales trainees competed in a gauntlet series to determine the ultimate "Heartbreak Kid" protege. Paul London defeated John Hope in the first match, Michael Shane pinned London in the second bout, and Spanky beat Shane in the third. In the final match, Spanky outclassed his primary rival, American Dragon, to win the series.

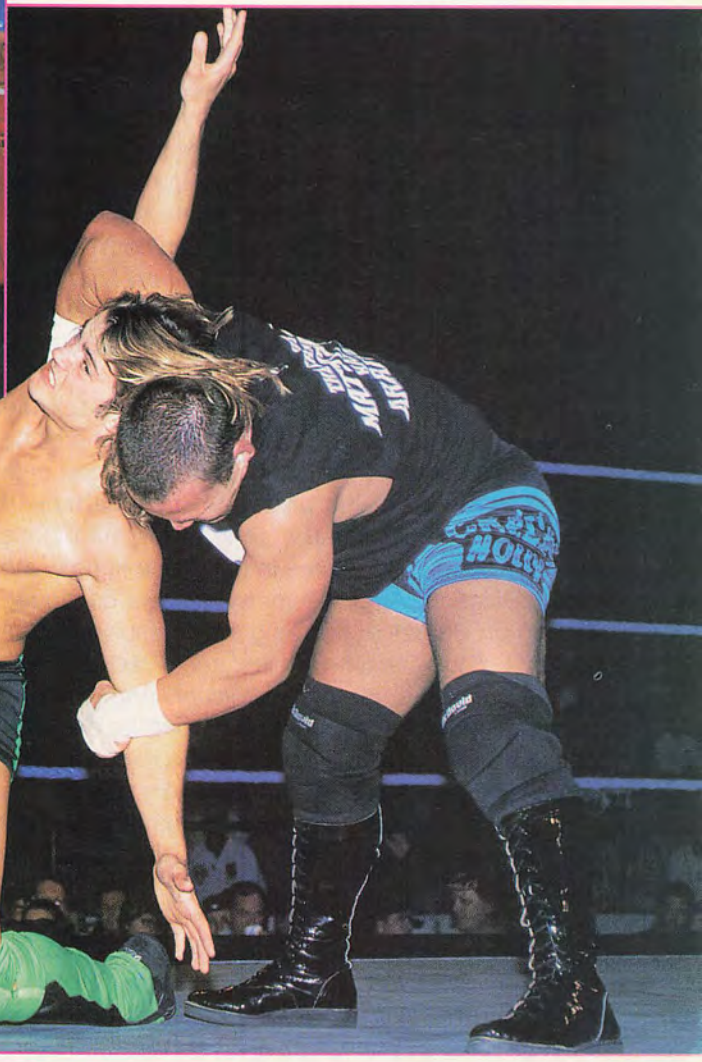
Future: Spanky remains highly successful on *Velocity*, but he seems to have reached a ceiling in the overall Smackdown brand. The entry of Paul London and perhaps other Michaels/Gonzales trainees could give his career another boost. Michaels jumping to Smackdown and unifying his proteges into one cohesive unit would give Spanky some much-needed direction, leading to greater fame and a healthier push.

② **When Spanky takes to the air and connects with dropkicks and other, flashier moves, he can look sensational. Sometimes, however, he gets a bit reckless. He runs into big trouble when those moves don't hit their intended mark.**

③ Give Spanky high points for guts. He won't run away from Brock Lesnar or other heavyweights who tower over him. But if he can't play a cat-and-mouse game with monsters such as Lesnar, he's likely to suffer a lopsided, painful loss.







④ When light heavyweights such as Crash Holly and Chance Beckett can overpower you relatively easily, it's time to think about hitting the weight room and bulking up a bit. And Spanky should. That and broaden his character.

Bob Backlund vs. Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka

Data Sheet

Title At Stake WWF World heavyweight
Referee Dick Kroll
Date June 28, 1982
Site Madison Square Garden, New York, New York

Synopsis

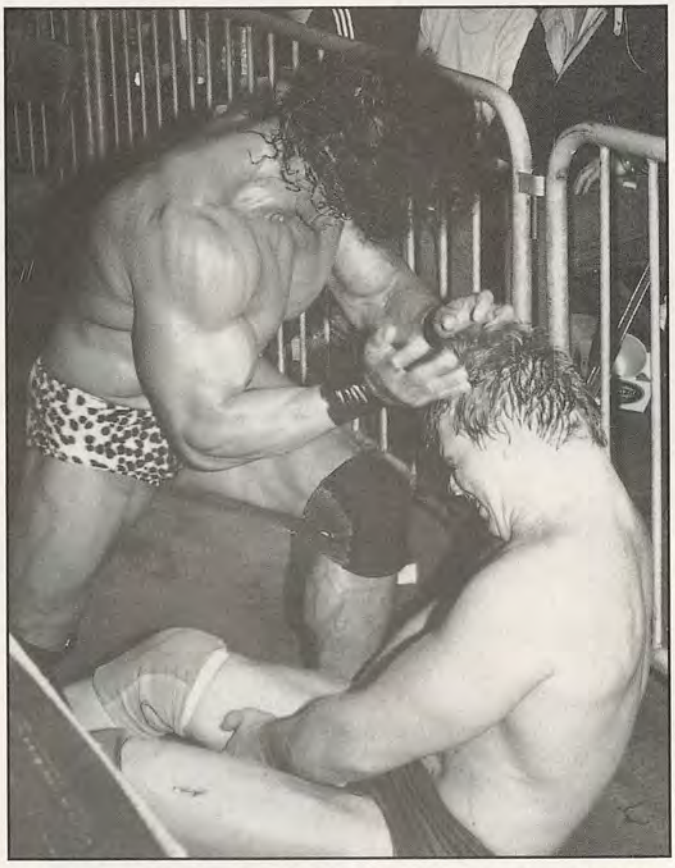
Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka raised the bar for wrestling daredevils in this unforgettable contest that was named 1982's Match of the Year by readers of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED.

The June 1982 steel cage match that will forever be remembered for Snuka's death-defying splash off the top of the cage was actually the third in a series of matches between the clean-cut all-American WWF champ and the sadistic madman from the Fiji Islands. In their first encounter at Madison Square Garden, Snuka battered Backlund with kneedrops, elbow-smashes, clawholds, karate chops, and bodypresses. The overwhelmed champion was barely able to muster a relatively ineffective piledriver as his only real offense, and Snuka seemed primed to walk away with Backlund's gold.

Despite dominating the champ, Snuka felt the need to bring a foreign object into play, provoking Backlund's manager, Arnold Skoaland, to leap onto the apron to warn his protege. Snuka attacked Skoaland, and Backlund sprang to his manager's defense, striking the referee in the melee to draw the disqualification. After the match, Snuka continued beating on Backlund, knocking the champion unconscious. For the first time in his career, Backlund was carried out of the ring on a stretcher. And when he first regained consciousness, Backlund let out what Associate Editor Craig Peters called a "bloodcurdling scream that sent a chill of terror down my spine."

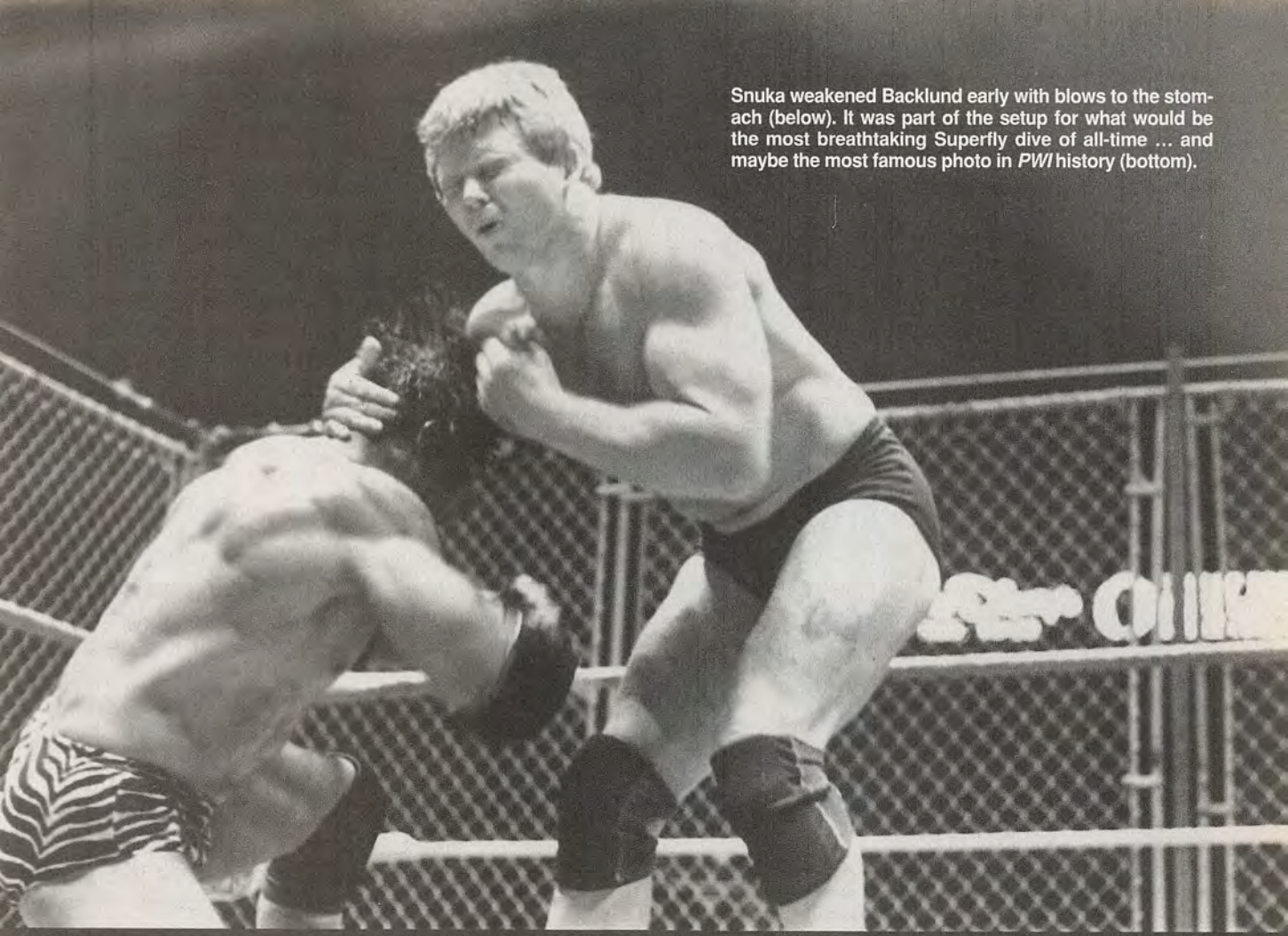
Backlund was again the loser in the rematch, but still retained his title, when the referee stopped the match on cuts.

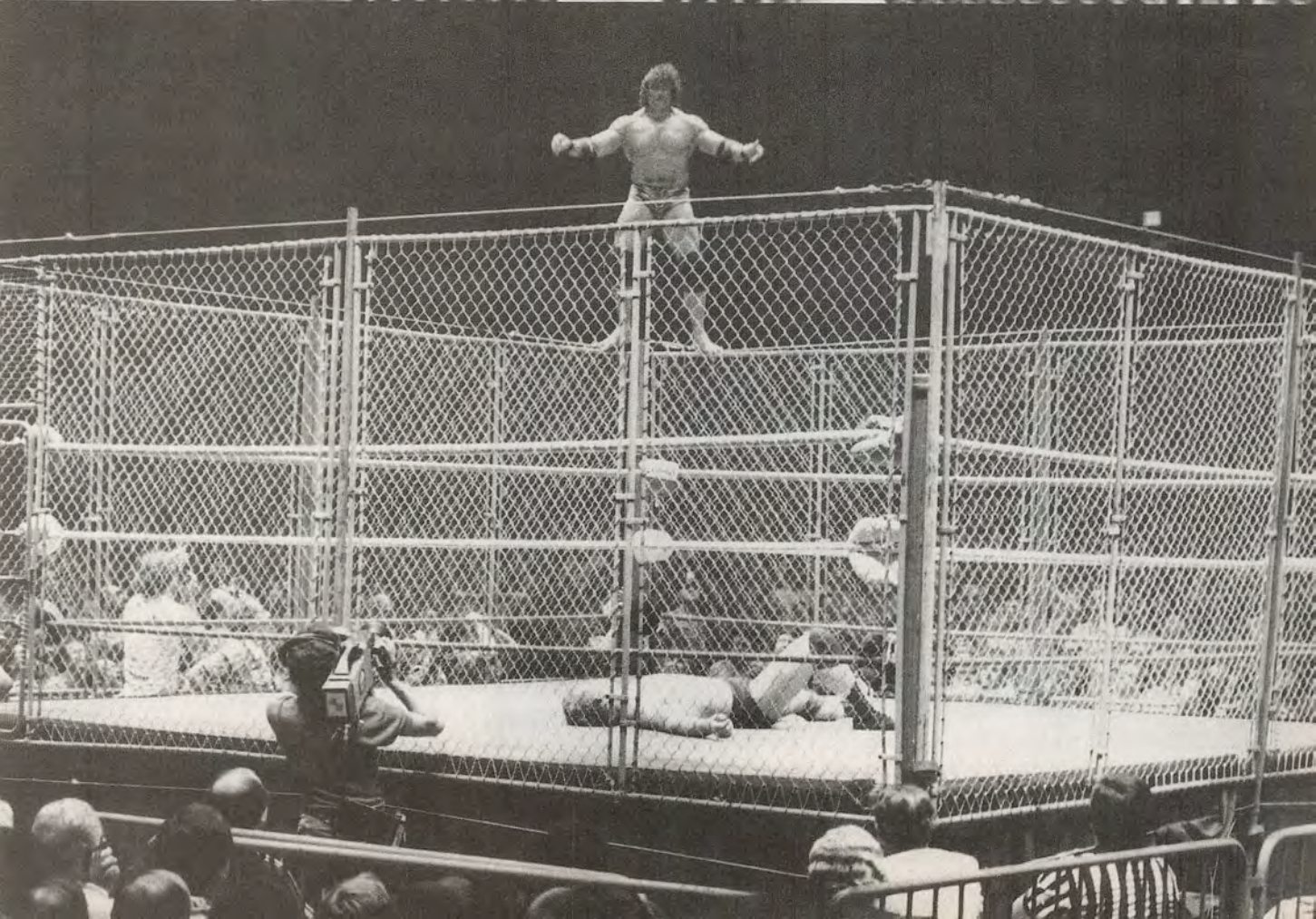
Fans from New York and beyond were clamoring for a return match. To prevent any outside interference from Skoaland or Snuka's manager, Capt. Lou Albano—and to prevent Snuka from attacking Skoaland or anyone else—WWF matchmakers

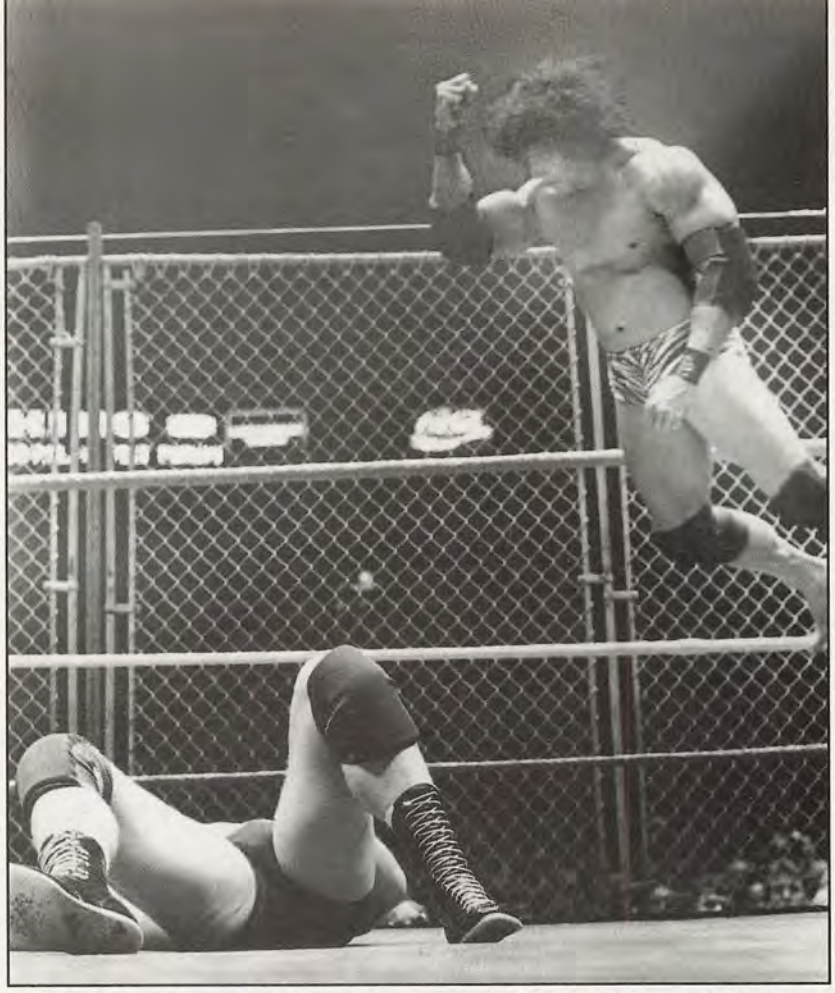


Bob Backlund had been attacked and beaten up enough times over the previous few months that there was really only one way to settle his feud with Jimmy Snuka: a steel cage match.

Snuka weakened Backlund early with blows to the stomach (below). It was part of the setup for what would be the most breathtaking Superfly dive of all-time ... and maybe the most famous photo in *PWI* history (bottom).







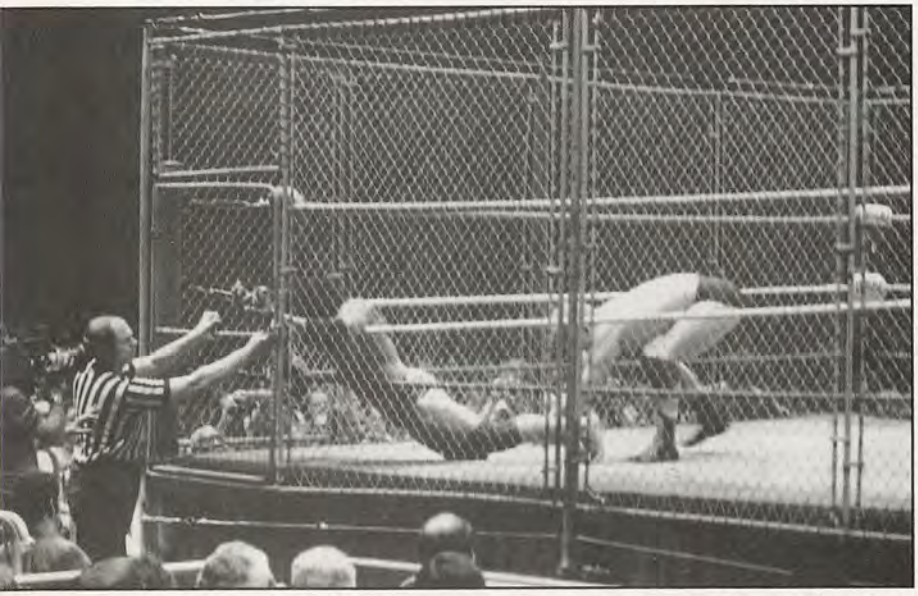
An elbow to the sternum left Backlund disoriented and vulnerable ... and the "Superfly" feeling like the WWF title was within reach.

decided the rematch should take place in a 15-foot-high steel cage. Curiously, the winner would be the man who climbed through the doorway and reached the floor, a stipulation that differed from the normal rule of the winner being the first man able to either go through the door *or* climb over the top of the cage. Some insiders considered this to be a major disadvantage for Snuka, whose climbing ability was without equal.

Snuka warily entered the cage, visibly uncomfortable with the idea of being locked inside the steel fence. Backlund, for his part, was focused entirely on the task at hand. Backlund attacked early, slamming Snuka to the mat and knocking the wind out of the wildman. Backlund rocked his challenger with forearms and punches and attempted to exit the cage early, but Snuka held on and kept the champion inside. In a bit of controversy, at one point Snuka freed himself from Backlund's clutches and tried to hurry through the cage door, but outside referee Dick Kroll seemed to hold it shut, preventing Snuka from exiting, and allowing Backlund to pull him back to the center of the ring. (Kroll would later claim he was attempting to pull the door open as Snuka was trying to pull—rather than push—it open from the inside.)

Backlund became frustrated, laying into Snuka with uncharacteristic intensity and rage. He grabbed Snuka by the hair and scraped his face against the cold steel cage, opening nasty gashes on his forehead.

But Snuka was nothing if not resilient. He backed Backlund down with a series of elbowsmashes and a backbreaker, followed by more elbowsmashes from the second rope. Snuka continued to batter Backlund with elbows and forearm shots, dropping the groggy champion to his knees. With blood dripping down his face, Snuka looked like a wounded animal locked in a kill-or-be-killed battle. With the image of Backlund laying helpless on a stretcher fresh in their memory, fans screamed for him to find a way to simply survive the onslaught.



Snuka made a few attempts to escape the cage through the door, but Backlund (and, possibly, referee Dick Kroll) was there to foil him.

With catlike quickness, Snuka scaled the turnbuckles and connected with a flying bodypress that left Backlund stunned in the middle of the ring. If this had been a regulation match, there is little question Snuka could have had Backlund pinned several times over. Rather than walking through the door, however, Snuka returned to the top rope, seemingly ready to hit his signature Superfly splash to end the bout.

Then, Snuka paused ...

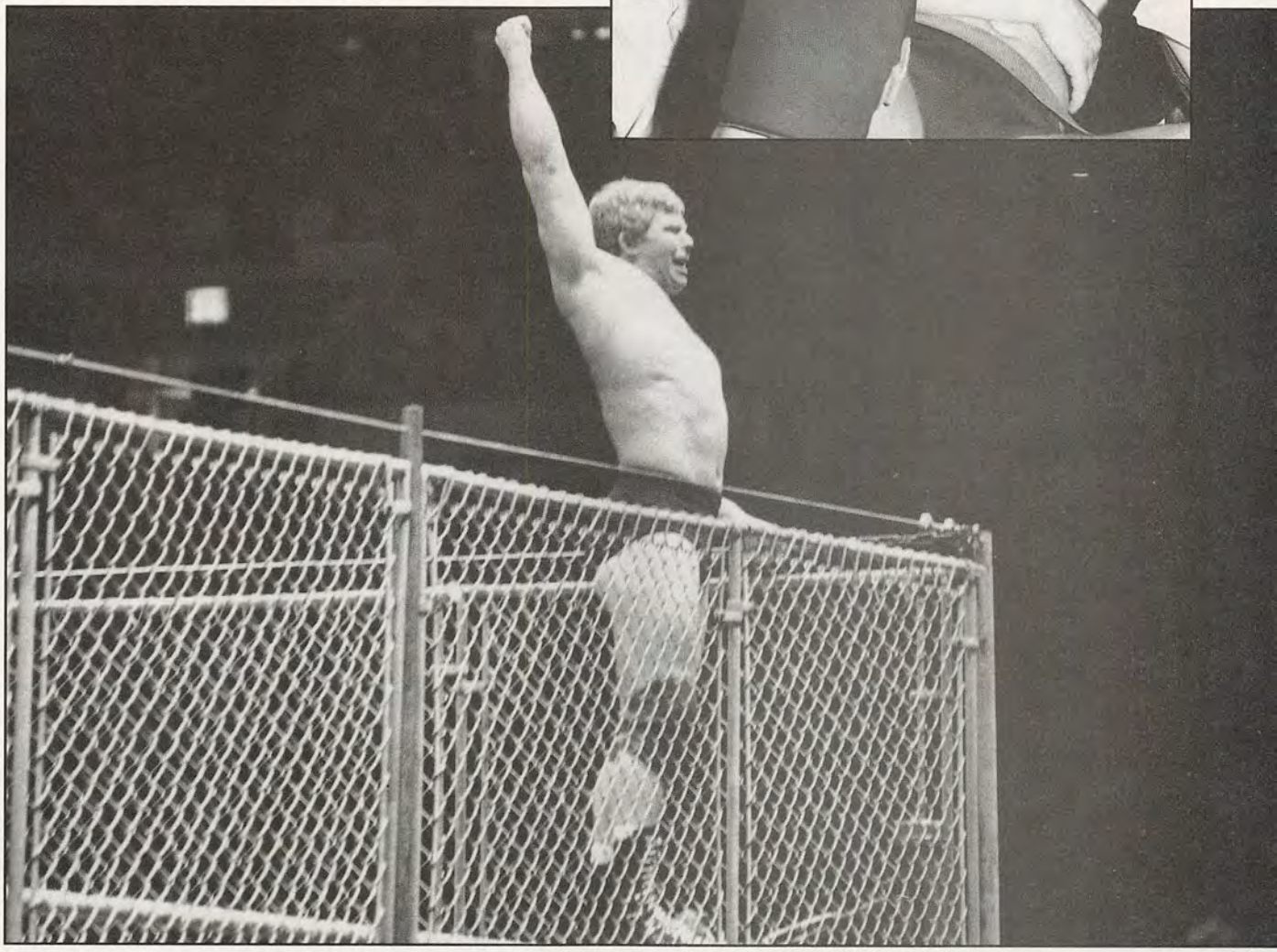
He looked up at the top of the cage and decided to make the climb. There he stood, 15 feet above Backlund, with

his arms outstretched in preparation for, at the time, the most daring maneuver ever attempted. The fans drew silent, at this point fearing more for the challenger than the champion. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, the former cliff-diver made his leap. At the last possible instant, however, Backlund summoned whatever energy he had remaining in his body and rolled out of the way. Snuka smashed into the canvas in a heap. "Superfly" remained virtually motionless on the mat for almost a full 10 minutes as the fans buzzed, wondering if he was seriously injured. Slowly, Backlund revived and crawled for the door, exiting the cage and winning the match.

In recent years, several wrestlers have leaped from greater heights and from more precarious perches, but Snuka's leap of faith was the originator. It was possibly the most unexpected—and dangerous—move ever attempted, and it remains one of the great highlight reel moments in WWF history.

Backlund may have won that match, but even in defeat, the "Superfly" had never flown higher. □

Earlier in the Backlund-Snuka trilogy, Backlund was taken to a hospital for observation (right). Had he not evaded Snuka's 15-foot dive in the cage match, he certainly would have been taken back to emergency instead of celebrating with the fans (below).

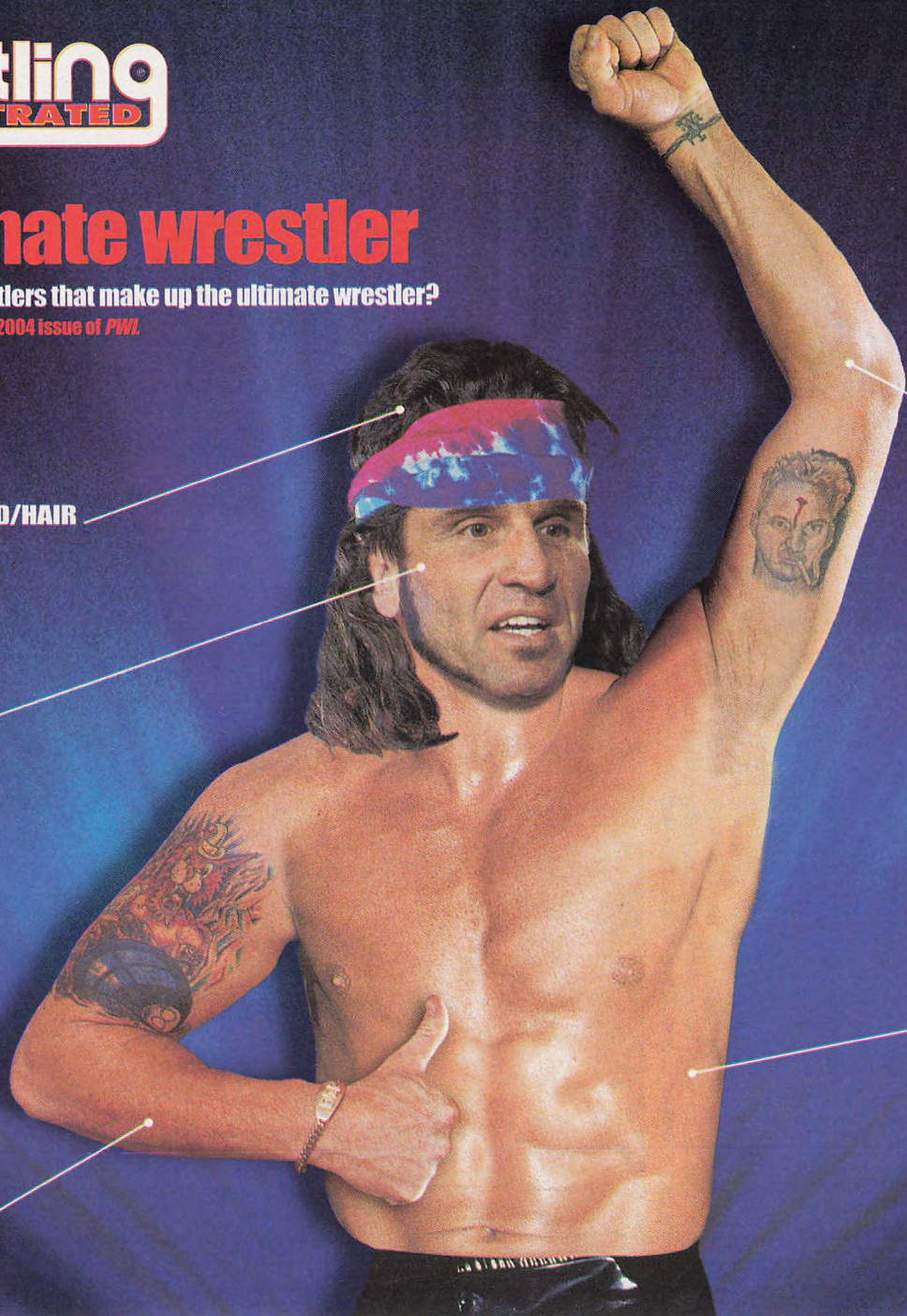


PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

the ultimate wrestler

Can you name the 7 wrestlers that make up the ultimate wrestler?

Answers will appear in the March 2004 issue of *PWI*



[Key to December's Ultimate Wrestler]

Hair: Josh Matthews
Face: James "Sinister Minister" Mitchell
Left Arm: Big Vito
Right Arm: Batista
Shirt: Taka Michinoku
Wrap: Shannon Moore
Legs: Chris Jericho

You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd *never* think of asking

12 questions

CHRIS SABIN

Which is better, *X-Men* or the NWA-TNA X division?

That's a tough question because I love *X-Men.* I'd have to say the X division is better because I get to be more involved in it.

A year ago, where did you expect to be with your career?

I still expected to be on the indies doing nothing too big yet. But I feel lucky that I've gotten to where I am now.

Is there life on Mars?

No.

What has been your greatest accomplishment in wrestling so far?

Winning the X title and being a regular in TNA.

If you added up all of your indy earnings, what could you buy?

Some boxes of Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal.

Why should anyone consider Michigan as a place to visit or even live?

The chain of lakes. There are several lakes all connected by rivers, so you can travel from lake to lake.

Who is the worst person to room with on the road?

Scott D'Amore, because he always makes me sleep on the floor. He doesn't even give me a pillow.

You have a choice between O.J. Simpson, Kelly Osbourne, and Jim Hellwig to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life. Which would you choose and why?

Kelly Osbourne. Knowing how she really is, I find her entertaining. Plus, the fact is that she *is* a girl.

Do you read the labels on food packages before you buy them?

Yes. It's a habit I picked up when I started dieting. Now I do it more often to cheat on my diet.

What's the last thing you notice about a woman?

Her fingernails.

Last month for the "hammer/midget/roulette wheel" question, C.M. Punk wanted to kill Colt Cabana and blame the midget. What tactic would you use to kill Cabana?

I would use 10 fat chicks and let them work their magic.

You have a hammer, midget, and a roulette wheel. What are *your* plans for the evening?

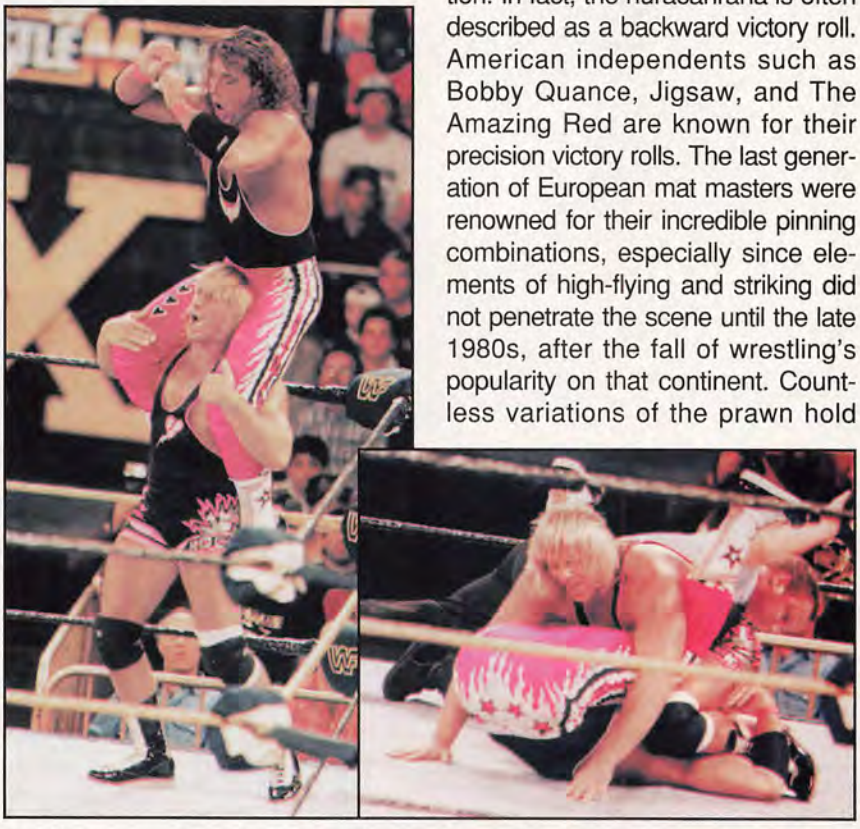
I'd play a game where I'd spin the wheel and each number would represent a finger on the midget. Wherever it would land, I'd whack that finger however many times the number said. □

fantastic finishers

Victory Roll

You might also hear it being called: forward rolling prawn hold, high-angle prawn hold

Where you might have seen it: The victory roll, like many variations of the prawn hold, is not as popular here in the United States as it is in Mexico and Europe. WWE superstars Edge and Rey Misterio Jr. have been known to showcase the move from time to time, although neither uses it as a finisher. Bret "Hitman" Hart made history by defeating Bam Bam Bigelow with a victory roll in the finals of the 1993 King of the Ring Tournament. In another famous Hart match, an attempted victory roll was blocked by brother Owen, leading to his upset pinfall victory over Bret at WrestleMania X at Madison Square Garden. Some wrestlers have used the move as an escape from The Road Warriors' doomsday device finisher, executing a victory roll to avoid the impact of the flying clothesline. In Mexico, the victory roll is used by practically every non-heavyweight wrestler active today, from Felino to Safari. In Lucha, the victory roll is the predecessor to the huracanrana, another flying move that ends in a tight pinning combination. In fact, the huracanrana is often described as a backward victory roll. American independents such as Bobby Quance, Jigsaw, and The Amazing Red are known for their precision victory rolls. The last generation of European mat masters were renowned for their incredible pinning combinations, especially since elements of high-flying and striking did not penetrate the scene until the late 1980s, after the fall of wrestling's popularity on that continent. Countless variations of the prawn hold were commonplace in matches of all different weight classes.



Bret Hart was expecting to finish off brother Owen with a perfectly executed victory roll at WrestleMania X (above left), but Owen knew Bret well enough to anticipate it, and he ended up reversing it to score the pinfall himself (above right).

The scoop: The victory roll is a common name given to a prawn hold pinning combination executed from atop an opponent's shoulders. It is a difficult and complex hold to apply, and relatively high-risk because of how easily it can be countered or blocked. The Arabian victory roll, a variation invented by Sabu and made famous in his *WCW Monday Nitro* debut against Alex Wright, is performed on an opponent sitting on the top turnbuckle. The man using the Arabian victory roll scales the buckles from the apron, and the move pulls both men off the top into the ring. This variation has also been called the super victory roll. Osaka Pro's Super Delfin invented a unique variation of the victory roll that starts atop an opponent's shoulders, and ends like a prawn hold, but is much more dangerous than the standard victory roll. Delfin spins a full 360 degrees from his foe's shoulders around into a body scissors before diving through the legs to complete his prawn hold. This tricky variation earned Delfin his first singles win over Luchador La Pantera, and the UWA welterweight title in the process.

How it's done: The hardest part of executing a victory roll is getting onto an opponent's shoulders. Some wrestlers scale their opponent's backs, some use the turnbuckles for help, and others just leap right up into what is sometimes referred to as the "electric chair position." After getting up there, a wrestler will wrap his legs inside his opponent's arms, tuck his head, and roll forward. As he nears the mat, the man executing the move will reach out and grab his opponent's legs near the ankles and finish the roll, placing his opponent squarely on his back. When the victory roll is completed, the wrestler in control will clasp his hands together, cradle the legs, and draw the weight of his opponent's body back across the plane of his shoulder blades. □

check it out!

Sabu has used many variations of the victory roll during his career. He knows that getting onto an opponent's shoulders is only step one.

Photo by Timothy A. Walker

The Wrestling Observer

hall of fame

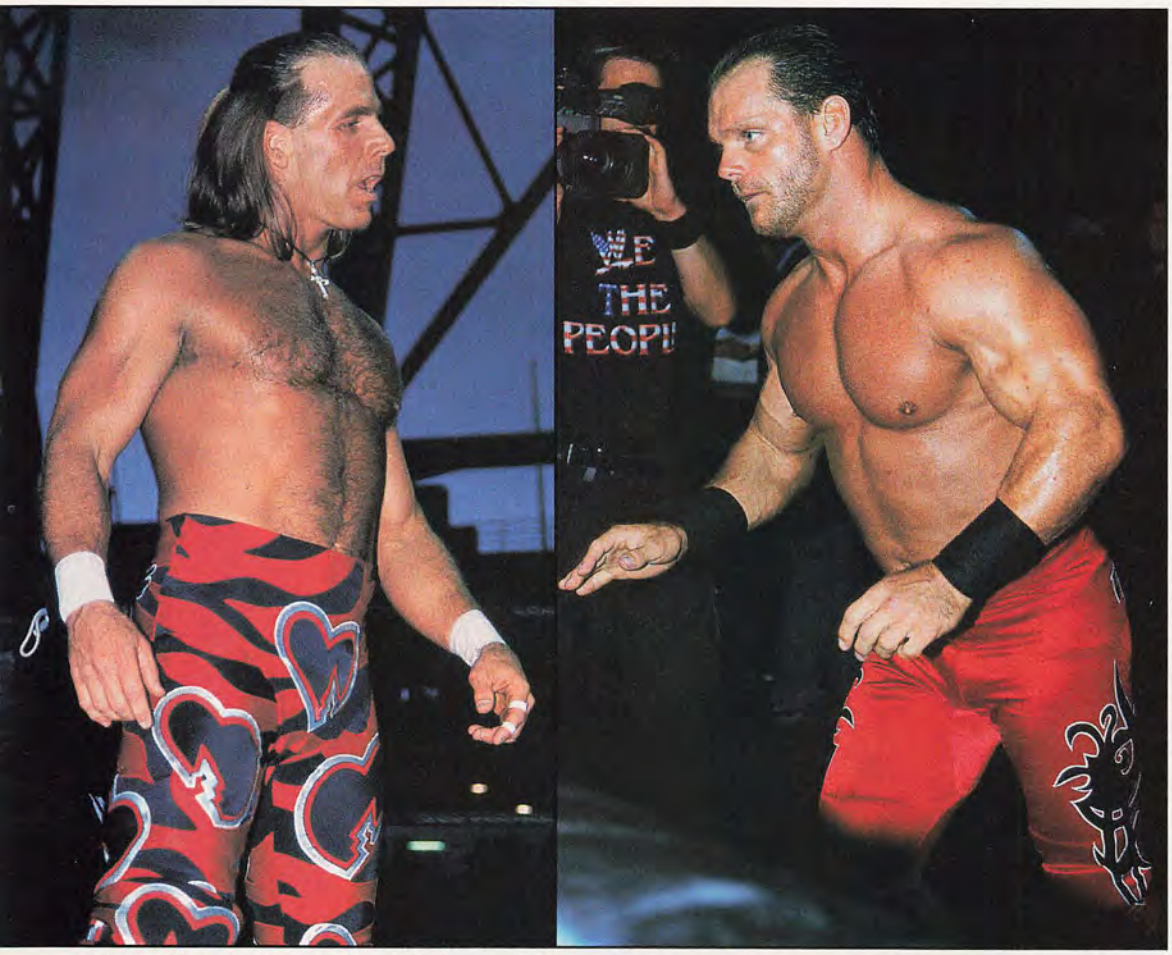
In each issue, *PWI* honors one member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, but in this issue, we look at the latest group of four to be inducted into what we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

The Class of 2003

THE 2003 *WRESTLING OBSERVER* Hall of Fame inductions granted recognition for a little-known former world champion and a revolutionary promoter, appreciation for a cult icon, and vindication for "The Heartbreak Kid."

"The single most controversial candidate in the history of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame balloting, Shawn Michaels, heads the list of four new members for 2003 in the Hall of Fame," Publisher Dave Meltzer announced in the *Observer.*

Michaels, who had fallen just short of the necessary number of votes for induction (60 percent of ballots in the candidate's home region, which in Michaels' case is the United States/Canada) in three of the past four elections, joined early-1900s champion Earl Caddock, Mexican promoter Francisco Flores, and Chris Benoit in the *Observer's* Class of 2003.



Shawn Michaels (above left) and Chris Benoit (above right) were the only two wrestlers voted into the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame in 2003. Both are obviously still great wrestlers, but both also have their shortcomings.

Candidates for Hall of Fame induction—wrestlers must be either 35 years old or entering their 15th year in the sport—are voted upon by a group of wrestling insiders, including past and present wrestlers, promoters, writers, and historians. Voters are asked to evaluate candidates' in-ring ability and/or drawing power, longevity, and their impact on wrestling.

In the past, critics reasoned that Michaels' "unprofessional behavior" (including backstage scuffles, political maneuvering, and un-

Michaels was perhaps the most athletic and exciting wrestler in North America during the 1990s, and maybe the most athletic WWE champion ever. His backstage demeanor is what made him such a hard sell for the Hall.

authorized comments on the mike) did more damage to the state of wrestling than good. But 119 voters gave Michaels the nod this year, giving the four-time WWE World champion 67 percent of the vote from his region and the green light into the Hall of Fame.

Michaels started his career in 1984 as a preliminary wrestler in Mid-South Wrestling. At the age of 21, he and partner Marty Jannetty hit their stride as AWA tag champions The Midnight Rockers. The team jumped to the WWF as The Rockers in 1990, where they competed against some of the top teams in the game. In 1992, Michaels split from Jannetty and embarked on his singles career, making his mark as the narcissistic "Heartbreak Kid."

On March 31, 1996, HBK won his first WWF World title, beating arch-rival Bret Hart at WrestleMania XII. Though Michaels won critical praise as the smallest and arguably the most athletic WWF champion ever, his backstage antics and temper tantrums earned him many an enemy in the dressing room.

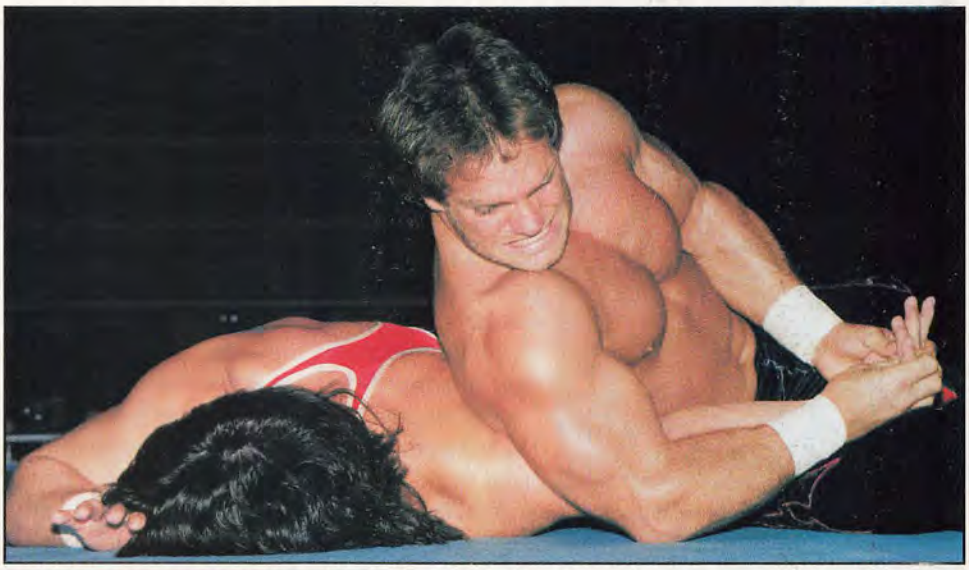
Following his World title loss to Steve Austin at WrestleMania XIV, Michaels announced his retirement due to serious back injuries. On August 25, 2002, he came out of retirement to defeat Triple-H in a thrilling match at SummerSlam. A fourth run as a WWE champion—as well as solid programs against Chris Jericho and Ric Flair and a more mature attitude outside the ring—silenced a lot of Michaels' critics and opened the doors to the Hall of Fame.

"Michaels' career will always be controversial, and he may wind up being the most controversial pick in the Hall," Meltzer wrote. "Most modern-day wrestlers who grew up watching him in the 1990s consider him one of the best ever. That allows many to overlook his faults, while others who don't refuse to acknowledge his brilliance in the ring."

Also inducted was Chris Benoit, albeit just barely. "The Canadian Crippler" received 108 votes, with 106 needed for inclusion.

"Many [voters] considered Benoit the wrestling superior to Michaels, and certainly when it comes to consistency, longevity, and mastering different styles, there really is no argument," Meltzer wrote. "The knock on Benoit had always been, and still is, that he was never a long-term headliner with a major promotion, and didn't have the charisma of most who are in."

Benoit was trained by the Hart family in Calgary and patterned himself after The Dynamite Kid. He first made his mark in New Japan as The Pegasus Kid and was recognized as the top foreign junior heavyweight in Japan in the early-1990s. After a brief run in WCW, Benoit jumped to ECW, where he was finally allowed to wrestle in the high-flying, stiff Japanese style. He later became a star in WCW, winning the World title from Sid Vicious on January 16, 2000. That same night, Benoit



As great as Benoit has been in the ring throughout his career, there is one question many candidates had to keep asking: Was he ever really a headliner?

This photo of Earl Caddock was taken the day after he became World champion in 1917. He was added to the Hall as one of two "overlooked figures from the past."

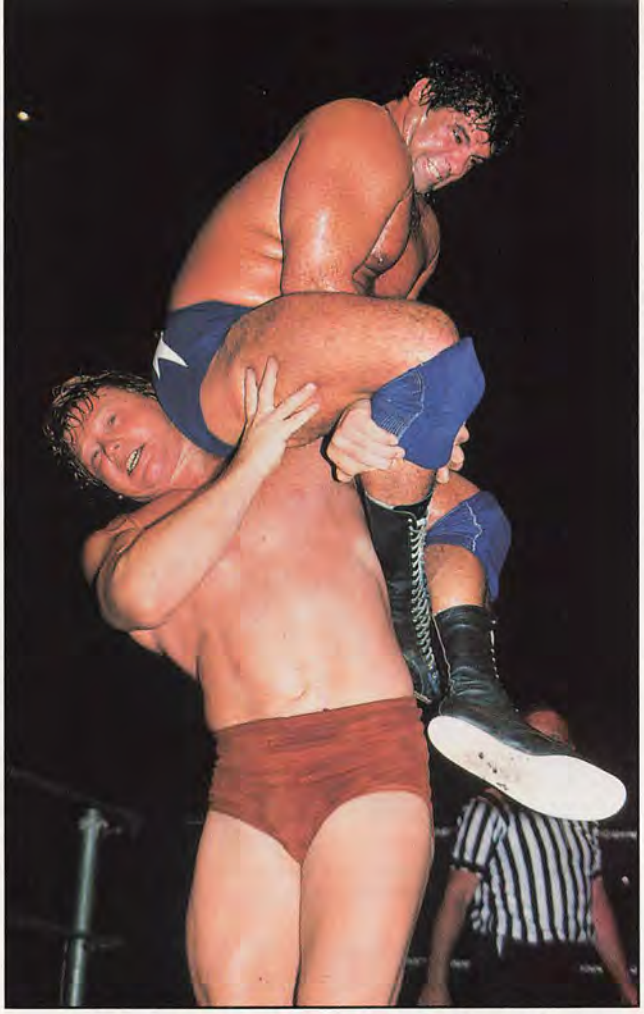
forfeited the title to jump to the WWF, where he established himself as a top contender to all the company's championships and, eventually, a four-time Intercontinental titlist.

Also inducted was former World champion Earl Caddock. Caddock defeated Joe Stecher on April 9, 1917, to become the World champion (a title that was the forerunner to today's NWA title). On January 30, 1920, Caddock lost to Stecher at Madison Square Garden in a bout that lasted more than two hours, setting a MSG record gate of $75,000—a record that lasted more than 50 years. The original "Man Of 1,000 Holds," Caddock was wrestling's biggest star from 1915 to 1922. Following his death in 1950, he was inducted into the Iowa Sports Hall of Fame.

Rounding out the class of 2003 is Francisco Flores, a dominant Mexican promoter during a golden era for Lucha Libre. After promoting matches with the EMLL promotion, Flores formed his own promotion: Lucha Libre Internacional, the parent company of the Universal Wrestling Association.

Ultimo Dragon had to be disappointed that he wasn't voted in this year. Since his WWE career is looking like a failure, he might not have much momentum this time next year.

The renegade promotion shifted the balance of power in Mexican wrestling. Its first major supercard was headlined by Lou Thesz against Mil Mascaras in a huge battle of legends. With bigger payoffs and guaranteed money, the UWA stole a lot of talent from larger promotions. Flores pushed smaller wrestlers, establishing elite lightweight and welterweight divisions. He also gave a major push to women wrestlers and helped create superstars like El Canek, Ultraman, and El Hijo Del Santo.



In spite of the fact that he reigned as WWF champion for almost six full years (minus a one-week interruption), it doesn't appear Bob Backlund will ever make the Hall.

"Flores' legacy is taking the risk of going against a long-time and well-established monopoly promoter, building a new company around smaller, faster, and better workers, and allowing new talent to become headliners through working them as [patriots] defending Mexico against international superstars," Meltzer wrote. "It was under Flores that the current Lucha Libre style evolved."

Both Flores and Caddock were not voted in, but rather added to the Hall as "overlooked figures from the past" in a decision made by Meltzer.

Falling just short of the number of votes required for induction this year were Ultimo Dragon, The Undertaker, and Bob Backlund, all of whom will remain on the ballot next year. Only wrestlers receiving less than 10 percent of the vote this year will be dropped from next year's ballot. They are Fuerza Guerrera, Yuji Nagata, and Yoshihiro Takayama. And next year's voting should also be interesting, as both Triple-H and Kurt Angle reach their 35th birthdays and thus become eligible for the first time. □

The Wrestling Observer Hall of Fame

1996 INDUCTEES

Abdullah the Butcher
Perro Aguayo
Andre the Giant
Bert Assirati
Shohei "Giant" Baba
Jim Barnett
Wild Red Berry
Fred Blassie
Blue Demon
Nick Bockwinkel
Paul Boesch
Bobo Brazil
Jack Brisco
Bruiser Brody
Mildred Burke
El Canek
Negro Casas
Riki Choshu
Jim Cornette
The Crusher
Alfonso Dantes
The Destroyer
Ted DiBiase
Dick the Bruiser
Dusek Family
Dynamite Kid
Fabulous Kangaroos
Jackie Fargo
Ric Flair
Tatsumi Fujinami
Dory Funk Jr.
Dory Funk Sr.
Terry Funk
Verne Gagne
Cavernario Galindo
Ed Don George
Gorgeous George
Frank Gotch
Karl Gotch
Superstar Graham
Eddie Graham
Rene Guajardo
Gory Guerrero
George Hackenschmidt
Stan Hansen
Bret Hart
Stu Hart
Bobby Heenan
Danny Hodge
Hulk Hogan
Antonio Inoki
Rayo de Jalisco Sr.
Tom Jenkins
Don Leo Jonathan
Gene Kiniski
Fred Kohler
Killer Kowalski
Ernie Ladd
Dick Lane
Jerry Lawler
Strangler Lewis
Jim Londos
Salvador Lutteroth
Akira Maeda
Devil Masami
Mil Mascaras
Dump Matsumoto
Earl McCready
Leroy McGuirk
Vince McMahon Jr.
Vince McMahon Sr.
Danny McShane
Rey Mendoza
Mitsuharu Misawa
Joe "Toots" Mondt
Sam Muchnick
Bronko Nagurski
Pat O'Connor
Kintaro Oki
Atsushi Onita
Pat Patterson
Antonio Pena
John Pesek
Roddy Piper
Harley Race
Dusty Rhodes
Rikidozan
Road Warriors
Yvon Robert
Billy Robinson
Antonino Rocca
Buddy Rogers
Lance Russell
Bruno Sammartino
El Santo
Jackie Sato
Randy Savage
Billy Shadow
The Sheik
Hisashi Shinma
Dara Singh
Gordon Solie
El Solitario
Rick Steamboat
Joe Stecher
Tony Stecher
Ray Steele
Ray Stevens
Nobuhiko Takada
Genichiro Tenryu
Lou Thesz
Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama)
Jumbo Tsuruta
Frank Tunney
Mad Dog Vachon
Big Van Vader
Johnny Valentine
Fritz Von Erich
Whipper Billy Watson
Bill Watts
Jaguar Yokota
Stanislaus Zbyszko

1997 INDUCTEES

Edouard Carpentier
Toshiaki Kawada
Jimmy Lennon
William Muldoon
Chigusa Nagayo

1998 INDUCTEE

Dos Caras

1999 INDUCTEES

Lioness Asuka
Jushin Liger
Keiji Muto
Jim Ross

2000 INDUCTEES

Steve Austin
Mick Foley
Shinya Hashimoto
Akira Hokuto
Bill Longson
Frank Sexton
Sandor Szabo

2001 INDUCTEES

Black Shadow
Diablo Velasco
Lizmark
Bull Nakano
El Satanico

2002 INDUCTEES

Martin "Farmer" Burns
Jack Curley
Kenta Kobashi
Wahoo McDaniel
Manami Toyota

2003 INDUCTEES

Chris Benoit
Earl Caddock
Francisco Flores
Shawn Michaels

2003 Hall of Fame balloting results

NAME	VOTES	%	NAME	VOTES	%	NAME	VOTES	%
Shawn Michaels	119	67%	Masahiro Chono	40	35%	Volk Han	21	18%
Chris Benoit	108	61%	Jimmy Snuka	59	33%	Seiji Sakaguchi	19	17%
Ultimo Dragon	66	58%	Paul Heyman	57	32%	Atlantis	12	17%
Undertaker	98	55%	Dick Murdoch	56	32%	Gorilla Monsoon	28	16%
Bob Backlund	91	51%	Don Owen	53	30%	Sting	26	15%
Hiroshi Hase	55	49%	Fabulous Moolah	47	27%	Wilbur Snyder	23	13%
Villano III	34	47%	Midnight Express	44	25%	Eddie Guerrero	19	11%
Carlos Colon	77	44%	Rock 'n' Roll Express	38	21%			
Fabulous Freebirds	77	44%	Tim Woods	38	21%			
Don Frye	49	43%	Arn Anderson	34	19%			
Blue Panther	31	43%	Owen Hart	34	19%			
Aja Kong	41	36%	Curt Hennig	33	19%			
Jesse Ventura	62	35%	Gran Hamada	22	19%			

Votes needed for inclusion in Hall of Fame:
U.S. and Canada—106; Japan—68, Mexico—44.

independent roundup

By Liz Hunter

IT DOESN'T LOOK good for Xtreme Pro Wrestling owners **Robert Zicari** and **Janet Romano** (a.k.a. **Rob Black** and **Lizzy Borden**). Both were indicted on federal charges of obscenity in connection with XPW's parent company, Extreme Associates. They are accused of sending pornographic movies to a Pittsburgh-area distributor. In addition, they allegedly transmitted obscene footage through the Extreme Associates Web site. If convicted, the couple could face up to 50 years in prison and up to $5-million in fines.

In other legal news, the Dover, Delaware, City Council has voted to ban ultraviolent wrestling shows from that city. The ordinance was created after City Council members viewed a tape of a Combat Zone Wrestling show held at Rack's Bar and Billiards, during which CZW wrestlers used fluorescent light tubes, thumbtacks, and panes of glass to hit each other. The ordinance prohibits the use of anything other than boxing gloves or the human body during a match. The measure also bans "tough man" contests, but will not affect the WWE or more traditional wrestling shows that don't include such weaponry.

You might recall that the state of New Jersey banned extreme wrestling in 2000, prompting CZW to seek a new venue in Delaware.

The legendary **Jim Cornette** made his Ring of Honor debut on August 9 and aligned himself with **The Prophecy**. Cornette came to ringside after a scramble match and complained that those types of matches aren't truly wrestling. **Dunn** and **Marcos** then appeared, claiming that they were the top team in ROH and that Cornette should manage them. Just as they finished making that statement, **Christopher Daniels**, **Dan Maff**, and **Allison Danger** jumped Dunn and Marcos. While The Prophecy beat down Dunn and Marcos, they were joined by Cornette, who got in several tennis racket shots on the duo.

Jim Cornette caused quite a racket in his Ring of Honor debut. This former "Manager Of Champions" has aligned himself with Christopher Daniels' Prophecy group.

Jay Lethal won the fourth annual Jersey J Cup by pinning **Homicide** in the final match of the tournament. Lethal had defeated **Jimmy Jacobs**, **C.M. Punk**, and **Rob Eckos** in earlier tournament matches ... **Brandon K**, **Dirk Ciglar**, and **Nikita Allanov** have formed a new stable in NWA East named **The Golden Triangle**. They are being led by NWA East General Manager of Wrestling Operations **Devin Devine** ... **"Sick" Nick Mondo** has been stripped of the CZW iron man title due to injuries ... Former WWE developmental wrestler **Steve Bradley** made his official debut in North East Championship Wrestling after spending several months talking trash from the sidelines. Bradley won his debut, defeating female competitor **Mercedes Martinez**. Martinez manhandled NECW President **Sheldon Goldberg** on her way to attacking Bradley, but Bradley countered her attack with a vicious offensive that allowed him to get the win.

IPW Hardcore Wrestling celebrated its fifth anniversary recently. On the show, **Billy Fives** defeated his student, **David Babylon**, after a rough match. The ongoing war between **Navy Seal**

and **Mike "Freedom Ryder" Sullivan** was confined to the ring this time by lumberjack rules. During the bout, **Russian Havoc** stormed the ring, attacking both men, who temporarily teamed up to toss Havoc to the lumberjacks outside the ring. Once they had disposed of the interfering Havoc, the two resumed their battle, which Seal won ... IPW wrestler **Steve Madison** is recovering from a ruptured appendix. He was forced to cancel a World Japan Pro Wrestling tour, as well as several independent dates ... PWF Northeast competitor **Matt Storm** recently lost a retirement match to **Billy Black** ... **Johnny Grunge**, formerly one-half of **Public Enemy** with **Rocco Rock**, unveiled his new tag team partner, **Jerry Grunge**, on an Intergalactic Wrestling Federation show. Jerry is Johnny's younger brother.

Quick title changes: Heroes of Wrestling, August 24: **Dirk Ciglar** and **Scottie Gash** defeated **The Bubbster** and **Colt Cabana** in a elimination match to win the tag team title ... **The Messiah** pinned **Adam Flash** to become the first heavyweight champ ... ***New Age Wrestling Alliance, August 24:*** **Chris Richter** defeated **Jerry Brown** to win the DFW title ... **Jerry Brown** defeated **Chris Richter** to win the DFW title ... ***Christian Wrestling Federation, August 23:*** **Mace** pinned light heavyweight champion **Wes Word** for the title ... ***Chaotic Wrestling, August 23:*** **Brian Black** and **The Mighty Mini** beat **Attrition** to win the tag team title ... ***World of Hurt Wrestling Fusion, August 23:*** **Kid Krush** defeated **Shane Alden** to win the cruiserweight title ... **Punk** defeated **Hoss** to win the heavyweight title ... ***Extreme Canadian Championship Wrestling, August 22:*** **Matt Classic** pinned **Major Hardway** in a tournament final to become the new NWA Pacific Northwest junior heavyweight champion ... **Moondog Manson** beat hardcore champ **Dropkick Murphy** in a barbed-wire match to win the title ... ***Ultimate Wrestling Federation, August 22:*** **The Law** defeated **X** to become the new heavyweight champion ... ***Union of Independent Professional Wrestlers, August 22:*** **Chris Hamrick** beat heavyweight champ **Sebastian Dark** to win the title ... ***Stampede Wrestling, August 22:*** **Karnage** defeated **Harry Smith** in the finals of a tournament to win the North American title ... ***South Coast Championship Wrestling, August 22:*** **The Kreeper** pinned **Stevie Sky** to become the new lightweight champion ... ***Blue Water Championship Wrestling, August 22:*** **El Diablo** defeated cruiserweight champion **Trik Nasty** to win the title ... **Team Greatness** defeated tag champs **Buddy Hanlon** and **Rick Solid** to win the title ... ***All Access Wrestling, August 17:*** **Elix Skipper** defeated **A.J. Styles** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the heavyweight title ... ***Coastal Real Extreme Wrestling, August 16:*** **Timber** beat heavyweight champion **The Stro** in a falls-count-anywhere match to win the title ... ***New York Wrestling Connection, August 16:*** **Johnny Ova** beat light heavyweight champ **Dan Barry** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the title **Tyler Payne** defeated **Dickie Rodz** in a tournament final to win the heavyweight title ... ***PWF Northeast, August 16:*** **Paul Hudson** pinned **T.J. Richter** to win the vacant junior heavyweight title ... **Kid Krazy** defeated heavyweight champ **Chris Venom** to win the title ... ***Texas Championship Wrestling, August 15:*** **Hellraiser Hark** defeated heavyweight champion **Krusher Kong** to win the title ... ***New Empire Wrestling, August 10:*** **Matt Houston** and **Kurt Solo** defeated **Brad Rainz** and **Brad Attitude** to win the tag team title ***Chaotic Wrestling, August 9:*** **Billy Kryptonite** beat heavyweight champion **Luis Ortiz** in a last-man-standing match to win the title ***Combat Zone Wrestling, August 9:*** **Nate Hatred** defeated **Nick Gage** to become the new Big Japan Wrestling death match champion ... **Sonjay Dutt** defeated **J.C. Bailey** in a ladder match to become the new IWA Mid-South light heavyweight champion ***Jersey All Pro Wrestling, August 2:*** **Al Snow** defeated **Mafia** for the heavyweight title ... **Azrieal** defeated **Monsta Mack** and **Nick Berk** to win the vacant light heavyweight title **Skinhead Ivan** defeated **Jay Lethal** for the TV title

Nate Hatred is the new Big Japan death match champion, having defeated Nick Gage on August 9 for the title

the international report

By Mike Spillane

THERE S NEVER BEEN a point to wishing **Toshiaki Kawada** good luck, as probably no one man has been plagued by streaks of bad luck more than he has in his storied wrestling career. All-Japan's elusive Triple Crown, once arguably the most coveted championship in the world, is the prize Kawada has always been seeking, and he captured it four times between 1994 and 2002. Every one of those four title reigns was abbreviated, however, every one cut short by injury—everything from a broken arm to blurred vision.

Maybe the fifth time will turn the trick, as Kawada captured the vacant championship for a fifth time by defeating **Shinjiro Otani** in the finals of a Triple Crown tournament at Budokan Hall on September 6. Previously, the trio of titles was held by Zero-One's **Shinya Hashimoto**, but serious injuries forced him to vacate, a situation with which Kawada is certainly familiar and can empathize. Kawada competed against men from Zero-One and All-Japan to capture the titles once again, and anticipation of the first singles encounter between Hashimoto and Kawada has already begun to build. No one doubts that Kawada makes an appropriate and deserving champion, but many can't help but speculate about how long he will be able to hold on to the Triple Crown before an inevitable injury heads off his championship run. Kawada's first reign was his longest—lasting a little more than five months—while his shortest was just one day, as he vacated the titles just one day after beating **Mitsuharu Misawa** due to injuries suffered during the title match.

If any *puroresu* star is having more than his share of bad luck at the moment, though, it's Otani. Not only did he lose to Kawada in the finals of the Triple Crown tournament, but just a few weeks earlier he was defeated by All-Japan's **Satoshi Kojima** at Zero-One's Fire Festival Tournament after making it into the final round. The Fire Festival, which helped to make Otani into a headliner with Zero-One just a year ago, is intended to be a showcase for the finest wrestlers in the promotion. Kojima joined the tour on a break from All-Japan, and while he was a major attraction as a visiting star from another company, few gave him much of a chance to win the tournament. To the chagrin of the Zero-One stars, though, Kojima started out strong (with a win over **Masato Tanaka**) and finished with a superb performance against Otani.

Tosniaki Kawada won his fifth All-Japan Triple Crown by beating Shinjiro Otani in a tournament final in September. Right about now, he's probably praying that his fifth reign won't end the way the others did—because of an injury.

Since adding a little weight to enable him to join the heavyweight ranks a few years back, Otani hasn't been able to sustain the sort of momentum he enjoyed as a cruiserweight, when he was revered as one of the best in the sport. Otani first became a major player in *puroresu* in August 1997, when he defeated **El Samurai** for the eight-title J-Crown champi-

onship, which had been held by the likes of **Jushin Liger**, **Ultimo Dragon**, and **Great Sasuke**. Otani was the fifth and last man to hold the unified titles.

The summer's big tournament in Japan is the G1 Climax, New Japan's annual round-robin series. This year's event showcased NOAH star and former Global Honored Crown champion **Jun Akiyama**, who set NJPW rings on fire about a year ago with his series of interpromotional dream matches opposite **Yuji Nagata**. The tournament featured a number of first encounters for Akiyama with New Japan regulars like **Masa Chono** and **Hiro Tanahashi**. **Hiroyoshi Tenzan**, the longtime tag team partner of **Masa Chono** and company mainstay for years, was once again pegged as a heavy favorite to win his block and make it to the finals. In years past, though, like the IWGP heavyweight belt, the G1 tournament win has evaded Tenzan. New Japan fans were elated when the long-overdue victory came for Tenzan, as he met and beat Akiyama in the finals. He will now be able to set his sights on **Yoshihiro Takayama** and the IWGP championship.

Mexico recently held one of *its* big tournaments of the year, the **Blue Demon** memorial called *Torneo de Leyenda Azul.* After being derailed earlier in the year by personal problems, EMLL star **Tarzan Boy** rebounded in a big way and showed that he was back in top form by prevailing over a field that featured a host of Lucha Libre's biggest stars. Participants in the tournament included reigning CMLL heavyweight champion **Mr. Niebla** and light heavyweight champ **Ultimo Guerrero**, as well as **Black Tiger**, **Dr. Wagner Jr.**, **Blue Panther**, **Villano IV**, and **Shocker**. This was a landmark singles win for Tarzan Boy, who is best known for his trios matches with regular partners **Rey Bucanero** and Ultimo Guerrero as **Los Infiernos del Ring**. As a threesome, they have most recently been embroiled in a feud with Shocker's **Los Guapos** squad, and Tarzan Boy's victory over Shocker at the conclusion of *Torneo de Leyenda Azul* only turned up the heat between the two stars.

One of Europe's up-and-coming tag teams recently completed its first tour of the United States, as **Swiss Money Holding** traveled from Zurich, Switzerland, for a multiple-week stay. **Double C** and **Ares** have already enjoyed success in their native Switzerland, as well as in Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, so the duo set their sights abroad. In the summer months, the Swiss tandem traveled everywhere from Michigan to Maryland, making stops along the way to win over fans at IWA Mid-South in Indiana, and to make it to the semifinals of the Tag World Grand Prix Tournament hosted by Pennsylvania-based independent CHIKARA. The tour took its toll on the twosome, as they dissolved the team in their final days in the States, squaring off in a few singles bouts, only to reunite before heading back to Europe.

The European tag team called Swiss Money Holding—Double C and Ares—started to make a name for themselves in the U.S. this summer by making a brief but mostly successful tour of the American independent circuit.

Kendo Ka Shin, All-Japan's reigning junior heavyweight champion, is another international sensation looking to make a name for himself stateside. Ka Shin was one of 12 men scheduled to compete in an ironman tournament being held by Combat Zone Wrestling, the ultraviolent independent group promoting in the northeastern United States. CZW and Ka Shin make for a strange pair, as Ka Shin is best known as a technical mat master, renowned for his *jujigatamae* armbar, and his techniques seem to contrast with the hardcore wrestling that has become commonplace at CZW events. Ka Shin was not planning to bring his All-Japan belt to the U.S., however. Having just defended it against Great Sasuke of Michinoku Pro fame, Ka Shin had no title defenses scheduled as of press time. □

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Dec. 1997: Losing Is Bull! Has Dennis Rodman Had It With Hulk Hogan? Also: Steve Austin, Jarrett & Debra, Harts, Funk-Francine, Chris Jericho.

Holiday 1997 (Special Issue): The Steiners' Million-Dollar Gamble! Also: 1998 calendar, Alex Wright, The Patriot, Sgt. Slaughter, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

Jan. 1998: Our Holiday Wish List For The Stars (Sable). Also: Bret Hart, Rey Misterio Jr., Steve Austin, Roddy Piper, Fritz Von Erich.

Feb. 1998: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '98. Also: Brian Pillman, Sting, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Reckless Youth.

March 1998: Hart Transplant! The Truth Behind Bret's Defection To WCW. Also: Steve McMichael, Bam Bam Bigelow, Steve Austin, Disco Inferno.

April 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 INSIDE WRESTLING Computer Tournament. Also: Scott Hall, Marlena, Chris Benoit, Gunn & James, Sabu-Sandman.

May 1998: Is The WWF Screwing Another Hart? Also: Steve Austin, Dallas Page, Booker T, Larry Zbyszko, Al Snow.

June 1998: Exclusive! Steve Austin: The 10 Men Who Inspired His Toughness. Also: Dusty & Dustin, Perry Saturn, Mortis, Jeff Jarrett.

July 1998 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Jericho-Misterio Jr., Steve Austin, Sunny, Scott Steiner, Christopher-Michinoku.

Aug. 1998: WrestleMania XIV: The *Real* Winners And Losers. Also: Sunny, Curt Hennig, Dan Severn, Ultimo Dragon.

Sept. 1998: Power Surge! While The NWO Fiddles ... These Men Are Burning. Also: Sable, Ultimo-Guerrero, DeGeneration X-Owen, Rocky Maivia, Mad Russian-Rambo.

Oct. 1998 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Steve Austin, Taka Michinoku, Al Snow, Hollywood Hogan, Roddy Piper, Misawa-Kawada.

Nov. 1998: Austin vs. Goldberg: Who Would Win And Why. Also: Bret Hart, Dude Love, Junkyard Dog, Helmsley-Michaels, Ray-Booker.

Dec. 1998: DDP's Big Bang Theories: Cutting Loose On Life, Love, & The Ultimate Buzz. Also: Sable-Jackie, Mankind, Hogan-Horace, D-Lo, APW.

Holiday 1998 (Special Issue): Kane: Still Haunted By His Day Of Glory. Also: Eddie Guerrero, Stevie Ray, Val Venis, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards, bonus calendar.

Jan. 1999: Seasons Greetings With A Bang (DDP & Kimberly). Also: Severn-Shamrock, Konnan, Arn, Undertaker-Kane, Chris Jericho.

Feb. 1999: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '99! Also: Hogan & Hart, D-Lo, Ken Shamrock, Slaughter-Snow.

March 1999: Estrange Situation! Insider Reveals: "Shane Still Resents His Father! Also: X-Pac, Hogan-Warrior, Jesse Ventura, Billy Kidman, Scott Norton.

April 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 INSIDE WRESTLING Computer Tournament. Also: Bossman-McMahon, Steiner & Bischoff, Hollywood Hogan, Wrath, Blue Meanie.

May 1999: Team Corporate's WrestleMania Scare! Mankind's Title Victory Could Have Spoiled Everything! Also: New Age Outlaws, Eddie Guerrero, Triple-H, Bill Goldberg.

June 1999: Still In-Vince-Ible! What Will It Take To Topple This Man? Also: Rey Misterio Jr., ECW, Triple-H, NWO, Blue Meanie.

July 1999 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Vince McMahon, Vincent, Eric Bischoff, Giant Baba.

Aug. 1999: WrestleMania XV: The *Real* Winners And Losers! Also: Vam Dam-Lynn, Saturn, Goldust, Steiner-Bagwell.

Sept. 1999: Shane, Come Back! Can Vince Survive Without His Son? Also: Bret Hart, Rick Rude, Ken Shamrock, Hogan-Flair-Page-Goldberg, Tajiri-Crazy.

Oct. 1999 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Mankind & Shamrock, Snow-Holly, Sting, Edge, Flair-Robinson, AIWF.

Nov. 1999: Crash At The Bash! Enter Sid, Viciously! Also: Undertaker-Austin, Acolytes, Master P, Debra, Justin Credible.

Dec. 1999: The Rock: What Makes You Love/Hate This Man? Also: Sting, Shane Douglas, Droz, Piper-Bagwell, Taz.

Holiday 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 Turnbuckle Turkey Awards. Also: Sting, Dogg-Gunn, Undertaker, Steve Corino, 2000 calendar.

Jan. 2000: Dreaming Of An Extreme Christmas (Tommy Dreamer & Francine). Also: Goldberg, Al Snow, Billy Gunn, Doring & Road Kill, cigar-chompers.

Feb. 2000: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For 2000! Also: Vince-Bulldog, Mike Awesome, Sid Vicious, Gorilla Monsoon.

March 2000: Kevin Nash & Scott Hall: Getting Inside The Outsiders' Heads. Also: Dudleys, Jerry Lynn, Vince-DX, Kimberly, Zero Gravity.

April 2000 (Special Issue): The Y2K Computer Tournament. Also: Jarrett-PTB, Christopher & Taylor, Lou E. Dangerously, Lawler-Fantastico.

May 2000: Hey, Scott, Watch Your Back! The NWO Is Setting You Up! Also: Hacksaw Duggan, Rikishi Phatu, Test, Mike Awesome.

June 2000: Chris Jericho's Deadliest Enemy: His Ego! Also: Tazz, Kidman-Torrie, Nash-Funk, Buff Bagwell, New Jack.

July 2000 (Special Issue): It's True! Kurt Angle Will Be Hotter Than The Rock In Six Months! Also: Elizabeth, Steve Blackman, Norman Smiley, Spike Dudley, personal questions.

Aug. 2000: WrestleMania 2000: The *Real* Winners & Losers! Also: Dustin-Funk, Eddie Guerrero, ECW extreme?, WCW analysis.

Sept. 2000: Those Damn Dudleys! Is There An Evil Act Fans Won't Cheer? Also: Billy Kidman, Taka Michinoku, Yoshihiro Tajiri, Jeff Jarrett.

Oct. 2000 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Kurt Angle, Malenko-Saturn, Lance Storm, Tori, Jumbo Tsuruta, ECW headliners.

Nov. 2000: When Will Triple-H Proclaim ... "I'm Sick Of Being A McMahon!" Also: Trish Stratus, Shane Douglas, Hulk Hogan, Kevin Nash, Yoshihiro Tajiri.

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Jan. 2001: Olympic Games: What Kind Of Angle Has Curt Been Running? Also: Tazz-Lawler, Big Vito, Stacy Keibler, Chris Benoit, Kid Kash, Chyna.

March 2001: Who Knows The Rock's Role? Is He Ditching Wrestling For Hollywood? Also: Trish Stratus, Billy Gunn, Jarrett-Sting, C.W. Anderson, Booker T.

May 2001: The WrestleMania Tip Sheet: What You Must Know About The Event Of The Year! Also: Scott Steiner, Dudleys, Malenko & Lita, Shane Douglas, Raven.

Aug. 2001: Game Face! We Haven't Seen Hunter's Ugly Side ... But Just Wait! Also: WWF vs. WCW, Kurt Angle, Vince McMahon, Booker T, Hardys & Lita, Haas brothers, WCW babes.

Oct. 2001: Will Debra Ice Stone-Cold? Also: Vince vs. Shane, Chyna, William Regal, former Big Three stars.

Dec. 2001: The WWF-WCW Dream Matches We Really Want! Also: Tazz, Dudleys, Perry Saturn, Johnny Valentine, 100 WCW facts.

Feb. 2002: RVD: The Story You've Been Missing For 10 Years! Also: Hardys, Randy Orton, Shawn Stasiak, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

April 2002: Feud Alert! The Lowdown On 2002's Hotest Showdowns! Also: Rikishi, Stacy Keibler, Shane Helms, 2001 report cards.

June 2002: Special Comeback Issue: Triple-H, Chris Benoit, Kevin Nash. Also: Chris Jericho, Howard Stern, hypothetical unification showdowns.

Aug. 2002: WrestleMania X8: The *Real* Winners And Losers. Also: Hulk Hogan, Scott Steiner, Jamie Noble, Jarrett-Christopher, All-Japan.

Oct. 2002: Dark Side Be Damned! Undertaker's At His Best As Himself! Also: Ric Flair, Triple-H, Wahoo McDaniel, Goldberg, WWE-Hollywood.

Dec. 2002: The Impossible Dream, Part 2: Can Angle Win Another Olympic Gold? Also: Shane McMahon, PTC-WWE, Trish Stratus, Malice, next best things.

Feb. 2003: HBK's Miracle Comeback: Will The Fans Let Him Make The Smart Choice? Also: Edge, RVD, Chuck & Billy, Russ Haas Memorial, Turnbuckle Turkeys.

April 2003: Big Poppa Pump: On A Dirty Mission To Clean Up WWE. Also: Ron Killings, Big Show, WWE agents, report cards.

June 2003: Grabbing For Greatness: Triple-H's Desperate Quest For Immortality. Also: Abdullah, Shawn Michaels, Chris Benoit, WCW winners & losers.

Aug. 2003: WrestleMania XIX: The Supercard That Changed The Course Of History! Also: Rene Dupree, The Hurricane, Chris Jericho, Team Angle, injuries.

Oct. 2003: Done? Don't Count On It! Stone-Cold Will Die If He Can't Fight! Also: Kliq, Miss Elizabeth, D-Lo Brown, FBI, WWE nostalgia.

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Spotlight Card of the Month

ST. LOUIS, MO—*WWE Velocity* & *Smackdown* tapings at the Savvis Center: **Mortis** defeated **Austin Williams** ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Shawn Daivari** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... **Nunzio** beat **Funaki** ... **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** defeated **Superstar Steve** & **Slater Vain** ... **Sean O'Haire** pinned **Ken Anderson** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Billy Kidman** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Danny Basham** defeated **Billy Gunn** ... **The Big Show** beat **The Undertaker** by countout ... **Tajiri** defeated **Rhyno** ... **John Cena** pinned **Zach Gowen** ... **Spanky** defeated **Brock Lesnar** by disqualification ... **A-Train** defeated **Stephanie McMahon**.
(08-12-03)

—"Spotlight" photos by James McAfee

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

PHOENIX—WWE SummerSlam at America West Arena: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **A-Train** ... **Shane McMahon** pinned **Eric Bischoff** ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Chris Benoit**, **Rhyno**, and **Tajiri** in a four-way match when he pinned Rhyno ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** pinned **Brock Lesnar** ... **Kane** pinned **Rob Van Dam** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** defeated **Bill Goldberg**, **Randy Orton**, **Kevin Nash**, **Shawn Michaels**, and **Chris Jericho** in a six-way "Elimination Chamber" match, last eliminating Goldberg via pinfall.
(08-24-03)

—Frank Krewda

ARKANSAS

TUCKERMAN—American Pro Wrestling's "Burned Alive" at the Tuckerman Fire Department: Heavyweight champion **Mike Cook** defeated **Sandman** ... **Justice** pinned **Dustin Nazereth** to become the cruiserweight champion ... Arkansas champion **Halo** pinned **Johnny Harper** ... **C.L. Smuve** & **Teko Murdoch** defeated **Judgment** & **Freezer Thompson** ... Heavyweight champion **Mike Cook** defeated **Bruiser Graham** ... **Jimmy Valiant** & **Fearless Aggression** beat **Austin Lane**, **J.T. West**, & **Deadly Dale**.
(08-08-03)

—Bryan Underwood

CALIFORNIA

HAYWARD—All Pro Wrestling at the APW Gym: Internet champion **B-Boy** defeated **Lil' Cholo** and **James Choi** in a three-way ladder match ... **Cheerleader Melissa** & **J.T. Hyatt** defeated **Vennis DeMarco** & **Chris Cole** ... **Super Dragon** & **Chris Bosh** defeated **Scorpio Sky** & **Quicksilver** ... **James Watkins** defeated **Billy Blade** ... **Nathan Rulez** defeated **Dana Lee** ... **Larry Blackwell** defeated **Big Sal**.
(08-23-03)

—Brandon Shearer

SAN FRANCISCO—Califa LLE at the Roccapulco: **Sara Del Ray** defeated **Angel** ... **Super Diablo** wrestled **Destruktor** to a no-contest ... **Hook Bomberry** & **Apollo Kahn** defeated **Adam Thornstowe** & **Brian Raymond** ... **Quicksilver**, **Scorpio Sky**, & **Kid Omega** defeated **Los Sanchos** & **Jon Jon** ... **Vic Grimes** defeated **Vinnie Massaro** and **Dynamite D** in a no-disqualification match ... Pro Wrestling NOAH GHC junior heavyweight champion **Michael Modest** defeated **Donovan Morgan** (**Crash Holly** was the guest referee) ... **Los Maximos** defeated **Vito** & **Sal Thomaselli** ... IWRG Intercontinental champion **Scorpio Jr.** defeated **Rockero Del Diablo**.
(08-03-03)

—Alex Lara

CONNECTICUT

PLAINFIELD—PWF Northeast at the Loomis Arena: **T.J. Richter** & **Paul Hudson** defeated **Jim Nastic** & **Irwin Quincy** ... **Billy Black** defeated **Matt Storm** in a retirement match ... **Demonica** wrestled **Ariel** to a no-contest ... **Paul**

We haven't seen much of Ultimo Dragon on *Smackdown* (or even *Velocity*) lately, but he looked excellent in beating Shawn Daivari in this dark match.

Hudson pinned **T.J. Richter** to win the vacant junior heavyweight title ... **Kid Krazy** defeated **Chris Venom** to win the heavyweight title ... **Ruy Batello** won a "Resurrection Rumble."
(08-16-03)

—Mike Babson

DELAWARE

DOVER—Combat Zone Wrestling at Rack's Bar & Billiards: **Zandig** defeated **Ian Rotten** in a barbed-wire-cage-with-explosive-charges/barbed-wire-honeycomb-mat/scaffold match ... **Z Barr** defeated **Jon Dahmer** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Ruckus** defeated **Derek Frazier** ... **Adam Flash** & **Ian Knoxx** defeated **Greg Matthews** & **Rebel** and tag team champions **The Backseat Boyz** in a three-way match (since The Backseat Boyz were not pinned, they retained the title) ... IWA light heavyweight champion **Sonjay Dutt** defeated **Jonny Storm** ... **Necro Butcher** defeated **J.C. Bailey** in a fans-bring-the-weapons match ... Heavyweight champion **Messiah** defeated **Cpl. Robinson** ..., BJW death match champion **Nate Hatred** defeated **Nick Gage** in a 200 light tube match.
(08-23-03)

—Jeff Beckett

FLORIDA

FORT LAUDERDALE—WWE at the Office Depot Center: U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **John Cena** ... **The Basham Brothers** beat **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Ultimo Dragon** ... **Billy Kidman**, **Orlando Jordan**, & **Spanky** beat **Chuck Palumbo**, **Johnny Stamboli**, & **Nunzio** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Rhyno** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** defeated **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **A-Train** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Dawn Marie**, **Nidia**, and **Sable** in a bikini challenge ... **Kurt Angle** & **The Undertaker** defeated **The Big Show** & **Brock Lesnar**.
(09-07-03)

—Lenny Stocker

TALLAHASSEE—WWE at the Leon County Civic Center: **The Hurricane** & **Trish Stratus** beat **Rico** & **Jackie Gayda** ... **Lance Storm** pinned **Tommy Dreamer** ... **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** beat **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** ... **Buh Buh Ray**, **D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Maven** ... **Chris Jericho** beat **Ric Flair** ... **Rob Van Dam** defeated **Kane** in a steel cage match (**Eric Bischoff** was the guest referee).
(09-05-03)

—Peter Amos

ST. PETERSBURG—Major League Wrestling at the Coliseum: **Jerry Lawler** pinned **Terry Funk** in a bounty match ... **Sabu** pinned **Christopher Daniels** in a spike match ... Global tag team crown champions **C.W. Anderson** & **Simon Diamond** defeated **The Sandman** & **Steve Williams** ... **Homicide** pinned **Jerry Lynn** ... **Michael Shane** & **Francine** defeated **Norman Smiley** & **G.I. Ho** in an intergender match ... **C.M. Punk** pinned **Raven** in a "straight edge rules" match ... **The Samoan Island Tribe** defeated **Monsta Mack** & **B-Boy** in a falls-count-anywhere match ... **Mikey Whipwreck** pinned **Tony Mamaluke** ... **Jimmy Yang** pinned **Sonjay Dutt** ... **Mana** pinned **Rich Criado** ... **Los Maximos** defeated **Nosawa** & **B-Boy**.
(08-22-03)

—Karen Tyson

PINELLAS—IPW Hardcore/NWA Florida at the Expo Hall: **J.R. Ryder** defeated **Dr. Heresy** ... **Jerrelle Clark** won a fatal four-way over **Justice**, **Naphtali**, and **John Brooks** ... **Frankie Capone**, **Cannon**, **Pat Powers**, & **Pat McGroin** defeated **Comic Book Guy Anderson**, **Pretty Fly**, **Lennox**, & **Mark Zout** ... **Danny Doring** defeated **Antonio Banks** ... **Billy Fives** defeated **David Babylon** ... **New Jack** & **Chaos** defeated **Mideon** & **Kubiak** in a four-corners-of-death match ... **Navy Seal** defeated **Mike Sullivan** in a lumberjack match ... **Mikey Tenderfoot** defeated **Rod Steel** in an "I Quit" match ... IPW tag team champions **Mike** & **Todd Shane** defeated **The Vandalz** to win the NWA Florida tag team title ... IPW heavyweight champion **Lex Lovett** defeated **Agent Steele** by submission in a falls-count-anywhere match ... Florida unified cruiserweight champion **Roderick Strong** defeated **Sedrick Strong** in a tables, ladders, and chairs match.
(08-16-03)

—Alan Wojcik

Perhaps Matt Hardy took his match with young Orlando Jordan a bit lightly. He was on the defensive for a while before taking the win by pinfall.

COCOA—SCW Florida at the Cosmopolitan Night Club: **Chasyn Rance** defeated **Josh Rich** ... **David Mercury** defeated **Manny Montana** ... **Dagon Briggs** & **Leon Scott** defeated **Prowler** & **Flatline** ... **Thump Dupree** defeated **Kid Romeo** ... **Sequel** defeated **Python** ... **Brian Gamble** defeated **Jason Hexx** ... **Towns Ellis** wrestled **Ryze** to a draw ... **New Jack** defeated **Axis**
(08-03-03)

—Paul Brooks

GEORGIA

COLUMBUS—WWE at the Civic Center: U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** beat **John Cena** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Rhyno** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Ultimo Dragon** ... **Billy Kidman**, **Orlando Jones**, & **Spanky** beat **Chuck Palumbo**, **Johnny Stamboli**, & **Nunzio** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** defeated **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **A-Train** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Dawn Marie**, **Nidia**, and **Sable** in a bikini challenge ... **Kurt Angle** & **The Undertaker** beat **The Big Show** & **Brock Lesnar**.
(09-08-03)

—Stephanie Green

SAVANNAH—WWE at the Civic Center: **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** ... **Lance Storm** pinned **Tommy Dreamer** ... **The Hurricane** & **Trish Stratus** beat **Rico** & **Jackie Gayda** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** beat **Maven** ... **Buh Buh Ray**, **D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... **Chris Jericho** beat **Ric Flair** by submission ... **Rob Van Dam** beat **Kane** in a steel cage match (**Eric Bischoff** was the guest referee).
(09-06-03)

—Scott Jordan

DUBLIN—GIWA at East Laurens Elementary School: **The Freak** beat **Oko Nono** ... **Jerry Lewis Jr.** defeated **Jake Slater** ... **Firewalker** beat **Big Bank Barfield** by disqualification ... **The Professor** beat **Oreon** ... Mid-state champion **Johnny Camo** defeated **Vordell Walker** ... **Matt Black** & **Mike Stratus** beat **Lance Christian** & **Sean Logan** ... **Preston Paradise** & **Dave Holliday** beat **Glacier** & **Mac Davis** by reverse decision.
(08-16-03)

—Anthony Hall

HARTWELL—IWA at the Middle School: **Dale Dwindle** & **Lance Christopher** defeated **Amos Jones** in a handicap tag match ... **Panhead Nelson** defeated **Chris Vanadore** ... **Rahn Jordan** & **James Boulevard** defeated **Tommy Sawyer** & **John Rordan** ... **Casey J** defeated **Tow Truck** ... Heavyweight champion **Billy Starr** defeated **Phillip Pain**.
(08-16-03)

—Jason Biddle

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside at the NWA Arena: **Jay Fury** beat **Nemesis** ... **Shadow Jackson** beat **Jeff Lewis** ... **Tank** & **Bulldog Raines** beat **T.C. Carnage** & **Adam Roberts** ... **Slim J** beat **Salvatore Rinauro** ... **Caprice Coleman** beat **Jason Cross** ... Junior heavyweight champ **Seth DeLay** beat **Todd Sexton** ... **Brandon P** & **Kaos** beat **The Dobbins Brothers** ... **Mikal Adryan** beat **Onyx** ... **Iceberg** beat **Azrael** by disqualification.
(08-06-03)

—Lorna Omalley

Nunzio defeated Funaki in a matchup of two of Smackdown's underrated cruiserweights ... despite taking a flying leap as a result of a back bodydrop.

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside at the NWA Arena: **Todd Sexton** & **Shadow Jackson** beat **Mr. Big** & **Brandon Knight** ... **Azrael** pinned **Nick Halen** ... **Seth DeLay** and **Ray Gordy** wrestled to a draw ... TV champion **Rainman** defeated **Caprice Coleman** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Hotstuff Hernandez** beat **Mikal Adryan** ... **Salvatore Rinauro** beat **Slim J** ... **Jeff Lewis** beat **Biggie Biggs** ... **Tank**, **Bulldog Raines**, & **Chad Dobbins** & **Jason Dobbins** beat **Jeremy V**, **Brandon P**, & **Kaos** ... **Jimmy Rave** beat **Azrael** by disqualification.
(08-02-03)

—Dorthy Podsvirow

ILLINOIS

ST. PETER—National Wrestling Coalition at the Prairie Days Festival: **Titan** pinned **Kid Dragon** ... Cruiserweight champion **Tommy Callaway** beat **Rosco D'Wayne Harris** ... **The Intimidator** beat **Matt Cothran** ... **The Intimidator** defeated **Chris Roulett** ... Ladies champion **Lady Vendetta** wrestled **Maria Lopez** to a double-disqualification ... **Scorpio**, **Ax Stevens**, & **Big Bubba Floyd** beat **Tony Storm**, **Marshall Tucker Jr.**, & **Tim Rich** ... **George the Animal Jr.** beat **Ice Cold Outlaw** ... **T-Bolt Baxton** and **Black Death** wrestled to a double-disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Lucky Dane** wrestled to a no-contest with **Steven Davis**.
(08-23-03)

—Brad Smithson

INDIANA

FORT WAYNE—WWE at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum: Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Val Venis** ... **The Hurricane**, **Rosey**, **Garrison Cade**, & **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Rico**, **Rodney Mack**, **Mark Henry**, & **Steven Richards** ... **Test** defeated **Spike Dudley** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** beat **Gail Kim**, **Ivory**, and **Jacquelyn** in a four-way elimination match ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Scott Steiner** ... **Bill Goldberg** pinned **Ric Flair** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Goldust** & **Lance Storm** and **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a three-way elimination match ... **Kane** defeated **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match.
(08-17-03)

—Kerry Vaughn

SOUTH BEND—New Breed Wrestling Association at ZB Falcons: **Dean Baldwin** defeated **The Cosmic Kid** ... **Danny Daniels** pinned **Joey Pink** ... **B.J. Whitmer** won a triple threat match against **Nigel McGuinness** and **Cody Hawk** ... **Ace Steel** defeated **Matt Stryker** ... **Lash LeRoux** & **Mike Wallace** defeated **Simply Marvelous** ... Heavyweight champion **Shark Boy** defeated NWA champion **A.J. Styles** by disqualification.
(08-16-03)

—Brian Schoonaert

EVANSVILLE—WWE at Roberts Municipal Stadium: Intercontinental champion **Christian** defeated **Val Venis** ... **Scotty Too Hotty** pinned **Nick Dinsmore** ... **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** beat **Steven Richards** & **Rico** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Scott Steiner** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Lance Storm** & **Goldust** and **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a three-way elimination match ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** beat **Gail Kim**, **Ivory**, and **Jacquelyn** in a four-way elimination match ... **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** beat **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** ... **Kane** beat **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match.
(08-15-03)

—Dominick Valenti

COLUMBUS—Hoosier Pro Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Donny Idol** defeated **Pompano Joe** ... **Dave Dynasty** defeated **Jack Powers** ... **Spazz** and **Chris Tindell** wrestled to a no-contest ... Heavyweight champion **Louie Lovins** defeated **Jesse Houston** ... **Gravedigger** defeated **Cooter Clampett** ... **Billy Maverick** defeated **Tony Bryant** ... **Dave Dynasty** & **Donny Idol** defeated **Pompano Joe** & **Jack Powers** to win the vacant tag team title ... **Tiny Tim** and **Brian Beech** wrestled to a time-limit draw in a match for the light heavyweight title.
(08-02-03)

—James Reynolds

IOWA

DES MOINES—WWE at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium: **Goldust**, **The Hurricane**, & **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Steven Richards**, **Rodney Mack**, & **Rico** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Maven** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** defeated **Gail Kim**, **Ivory**, and **Victoria** in a four-way elimination match (**Val Venis** was the guest referee) ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Christian** pinned Intercontinental champion **Booker T** to win the title ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Lance Storm** ... **Kane** defeated **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match.
(08-10-03)

—Don Flannery

KANSAS

WICHITA—WWE at the Kansas Coliseum: Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Matt Hardy** and **Nunzio** in a three-way match ... **Zach Gowen** & **Spanky** beat **The Basham Brothers** ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **Sean O'Haire** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **John Cena** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Rhyno** in a submission match ... **The Undertaker** pinned **A-Train** ... **Sable** defeated **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** defeated **The Big Show** and **Brock Lesnar** in a three-way match.
(08-10-03)

—Ralph Roeper

KENTUCKY

SOMERSET—HCW Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **The Chosen One** beat **Shogun** ... **Ric Gunner** beat **Deja Vu** ... **Alex Walker** & **The Louisville Mugger** beat **The Chosen One** in a handicap streetfight to win the tag team title ... **Evil Intentions** wrestled to a no-contest with **Dub C** & **Amazing Pookie** ... Heavyweight champion **Shawn Christopher** defeated **Ric Gunner** in a loser-leaves-HCW match.
(09-05-03)

—Darrell Fugate

GEORGETOWN—Central Wrestling Alliance at the Convention Center: **Jimmy Lamb** defeated **Boxcar Bruce** ... **Cujo** defeated **Syxe** ... **Terry Alan** & **Redneck Superstar** beat **Mongoose** & **Dick Dalton** by disqualification ... **J.T. Money** defeated **Cash Money** and **Psycho Ninja** in a three-way dance ... Heavyweight champion **Larry D** defeated **Bo Johnson**.
(08-17-03)

—Kyle Boone

LEXINGTON—WWE at Rupp Arena: **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** ... **Test** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... **Scotty Too Hotty** beat **Nick Dinsmore** ... **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Steven Richards** & **Rico** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Scott Steiner** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** defeated **Jacquelyn**, **Ivory**, and **Gail Kim** in a four-way elimination match ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Goldust** & **Lance Storm** and **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** in a three-way elimination match ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Kane** beat **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match.
(08-16-03)

—Dan Murphy

LOUISIANA

BATON ROUGE—Classic Championship Wrestling

at the Belmont Grand Ballroom: **Crazy Joe** & **Half Breed** fought **Alkita** to a double-countout ... **Prophecy Jordan** defeated **Old School** ... GPW Global heavyweight champion **Blade Boudreaux** beat **Brian Hart** ... **Bubba Monroe** beat **King Cobra** ... **One Man Gang** defeated **Slam Shady** ... **Sam Houston** won a brass knuckles battle royal. (08-09-03)

—Matt Duffield

MAINE

SOUTH PORTLAND—Chaotic Wrestling at the Strive Center: New England champion **Vince Vicallo** beat **Dr. Reginald Heresy** ... **Psycho** beat **Arch Kincaid** ... **Handsome Johnny** beat **Brian Buffet** ... Heavyweight champion **Billy Kryptonite** beat **Adam Booker** ... **Brian Black** & **The Mighty Mini** beat **Attrition** to win the tag team championship ... **John Walters** beat **Luis Ortiz** in an unsanctioned streetfight. (08-23-03)

—Rich Palladino

MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON—WWE at the FleetCenter: Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Nunzio** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... **Matt Hardy** beat **Mortis** ... **Billy Kidman** & **Spanky** defeated **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **A-Train** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **Rhyno** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Sable**, **Dawn Marie**, and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... **The Undertaker** beat **The Big Show** and **Brock Lesnar** in a three-way match (**John Cena** was the guest referee). (08-30-03)

—Liz Hunter

NEW BEDFORD—South Coast Championship Wrestling at the Top Rope Arena at Price Rite Plaza: **Fantastic Frank** beat **Derek Destiny** ... **The Kreeper** pinned **Stevie Sky** to become the new lightweight champion ... **Trinity H. Campbell** defeated **Athena** ... **Gino Giovanni** beat **Nick Narcisstic** ... **Troy Bond** pinned **Mike Majors** ... **Nick Narcisstic** defeated **Mark Damon** ... **Kid Capri** pinned **Tremor** ... Heavyweight champion **Johnny Angel** beat **G.Q. Smooth**. (08-22-03)

—Shawn O'Domski

MICHIGAN

KINGSTON—Blue Water Championship Wrestling at the Kingston Festival: **Southern Justice** defeated **Whipdog** & **Steven Summers** by disqualification ... **Willie Richardson** defeated **Super Meetsee** ... **El Diablo** defeated **Trik Nasty** to become the cruiserweight champ ... Hardcore champion **X-Convict** defeated **Eric Copeland** ... **Team Greatness** defeated **Buddy Hanlon** & **Rick Solid** to win the tag team title ... Heavyweight champion **Sean Casey** defeated **Germel Quinn**. (08-22-03)

—Aaron McMann

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS—WWE at the Target Center: **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... **Matt Hardy** defeated **Zach Gowen** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Sable**, **Dawn Marie**, and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Billy Kidman** and **Shannon Moore** in a three-way match ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **A-Train** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Tajiri** beat **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rhyno** ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** beat **The Big Show** and **Brock Lesnar** in a three-way match. (08-16-03)

—Jerry Stevenson

COTTAGE GROVE—Neo Pro Wrestling at the Armory: **Pete Huge** defeated **Kaos** ... **John Johnson** defeated **Mason Quinn** ... **Justin Lee** won a triple threat match against **Silas Young** and **Shimdog** ... **Horace the Psychopath** defeated **The Genuine Article** ... **Austin Aries** won a triple threat match against **Pretty Boy Delgado** and **Ted Dixon** ... **Joey E.** defeated **Dysfunction** to win the King of the Ladder Match trophy. (08-08-03)

—Nicholas Loken

MISSISSIPPI

BILOXI—WWE at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center: Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Garrison Cade**, **The Hurricane**, **Mark Jindrak**, & **Rosey** defeated **Mark Henry**, **Rodney Mack**, **Rico**, & **Steven Richards** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** defeated **Trish Stratus** and **Jazz** in a three-way match (**Lance Storm** was the guest referee) ... **Buh Buh Ray**, **D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Maven** defeated **Ric Flair** & **Randy Orton** ... **Kane** pinned **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match. (08-31-03)

—Natalie Burke

HATTIESBURG—WWE at the Reed Green Coliseum: **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** beat **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** beat **Val Venis** ... **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** beat **Steven Richards** & **Rico** ... **Buh Buh Ray**, **D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** beat **Trish Stratus** and **Jazz** in a three-way match (**Lance Storm** was the guest referee) ... **Scott Steiner** defeated **Test** ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Maven** beat **Ric Flair** & **Randy Orton** ... **Kane** beat **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match. (08-30-03)

—Sam Sanders

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS—Gateway Championship Wrestling at Aggie's Banquet Hall: **Dingo** defeated **Jackal** ... **Sam Bacardi** wrestled **Cabal** to a double-countout ... **Kevin Sharp** defeated **Kory Twist** ... **Makaze** defeated **Daizee Haze** and **Billy McNeil** in a triple threat match ... **Chaz Wesson** defeated **Jynx** ... **Delirious** defeated **Ian Storm** ... **Chris Hargis** defeated **Sean Vincent** ... **Jack Adonis** defeated **Heart Attack Jack** ... Light heavyweight champion **Ms. Chif** defeated **Matt Sydal** ... Heavyweight champion **Nikki Strychnine** defeated **Outtkast**. (08-16-03)

—Dorian Sinclair

KANSAS CITY—WWE at Kemper Arena: Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Matt Hardy** and **Nunzio** in a three-way match ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **Sean O'Haire** ... **Zach Gowen** & **Spanky** beat **The Basham Brothers** ... **John Cena** defeated **Orlando Jordan** ... Smackdown

Sean O'Haire's push has all but disappeared since Roddy Piper was fired. Still, Ken Anderson had to be impressed by his performance.

Because he's much larger than Rey Misterio Jr., Shelton Benjamin could use a lot of leverage to make an abdominal stretch really hurt. Benjamin and Charlie Haas outlasted Misterio and Kidman.

tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** defeated **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Rhyno** in a submission match ... **The Undertaker** pinned **A-Train** ... **Sable** beat **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** beat **Brock Lesnar** and **The Big Show** in a three-way match.
(08-11-03)

—Amy Willis

NEVADA

LAS VEGAS—Ultimate Wrestling Federation at the UWF Arena: Nevada champion **Tekniq** defeated **Legacy** ... **Eyce** defeated **Brady A. Desire** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Funnybone** defeated **Brother William** ... **Nightcrawler** defeated **Joey D** & **J Studd** in a handicap match ... **Kid U.S.A.** defeated **Judo Jimmy** ... **Fredo** defeated **Sammy O'Shea** ... **The Law** defeated **X** to become the new heavyweight champion.
(08-22-03)

—Shaun Daily

NEW JERSEY

WEST PATERSON—Independent Wrestling Federation at the IWF Arena: Junior heavyweight champ **Dan McGuire** pinned **Jay Blaze** ... **Travis Blake** beat American champion **Shawn Donavan** by countout ... **Roman** defeated **Greg Goodman** ... Tag team champs **Pierce St. John** & **Shane O'Brien** beat **Dylan Black** ... Heavyweight champion **Fred Sampson** defeated **Tommy Trouble** ... **Tyler Mann** & **Aaron Stride** defeated **Nik Rage** & **Chris Steeler** ... **Kevin Knight** defeated **Brandon Young**.
(08-23-03)

—Dorthy Podsvirow

WILDWOOD—NWA/NWS at Schlessenger Beach: **TNT** beat **Hashim Ali** and **Biggie Biggs** by disqualification ... **Tommy Force** wrestled **Dave Webb** and **Shawn Z** to a no-contest ... **The Patriot** pinned NWS champion **Biggie Biggs** in a non-title match ... **TNT** defeated NWS champion **Biggie Biggs** in a non-title match ... **Shawn Z** won a three-way dance, beating **Tommy Force** and **Dave Webb** ... **The Patriot** pinned **Hashim Ali**.
(08-13-03)

—Dorthy Podsvirow

NEW YORK

UNIONDALE—WWE at Nassau Coliseum: Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Nunzio** ... **The Basham Brothers** beat **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... **Matt Hardy** defeated **Mortis** ... **Billy Kidman** & **Spanky** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **A-Train** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... **Rhyno** wrestled to a no-contest with **Tajiri** ... **Sable** defeated **Nidia**, **Torrie Wilson**, and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini challenge ... **The Undertaker** beat **The Big Show** and **Brock Lesnar** in a three-way no-disqualification match (**John Cena** was the guest referee).
(08-31-03)

—Blake Bronson

DEER PARK—New York Wrestling Connection at the Community Center: Interstate champ **Vinny Stylin'** wrestled **Maxmilyin** to a double-countout ... **Tyler Payne** & **Havok** defeated tag team champions **Wayne** & **Mikey Whipwreck** in a non-title match ... **Damian Dragon** defeated **Armand DeMuerto** ... **Johnny Ova** defeated light heavyweight champion **Dan Barry** to win the title in best-of-three-falls match ... **Mike Mayhem** defeated **Lamar Braxton Porter** ... **Grim Reefer** defeated **Joey Braggiol** ... **Spyder** defeated **Ken Scampi** ... ***In a tournament to declare a new heavyweight champion, quarterfinals:*** **John Curse** defeated **Chief Dudley** ... **Tony Burma** defeated **Matt Hype** ... **Tyler Payne** defeated **Nuke** ... ***Semifinals:*** Payne defeated Burma by disqualification ... **Dickie Rodz** defeated Curse by disqualification ... ***Finals:*** Payne defeated Rodz to become the new heavyweight champion.
(08-16-03)

—Daniel Dayton

NORTH CAROLINA

BURLINGTON—CWF/FWA-Carolinas at Club CWF: **The SouthSide Playas** defeated **The Unholy Empire** ... **Mitch Norris** defeated **Trent Wylde** ... RGL champion **Xsiris** defeated **Kenny James** to retain the title ... Carolinas heavyweight champion **Corey Edsel** defeated **Drake Tungsten** in a non-title match ... **Sean Powers** defeated **Quinson Valentino** ... Carolinas tag team champions **The Brads** defeated **Gemini Kid** & **Kamikaze Kid**.
(08-16-03)

—Tara Rheaume

WILLIAMSTON—Coastal Real Extreme Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **B.J. Winger** & **Mike Youngblood** beat **Chris Derringer** & **Adrian Whisper** ... **Chris Escobar** beat **Marty Reed** and **Brandon Day** in a three-way elimination match ... **Gluteus Maximus** beat **Todd Edd** ... Extreme champion **John Thundercloud** beat **Aaron Devil** ... **Tre-G** beat **Steffi** ... Tag team champs **Damian Wayne** & **Mike Booth** beat **Patient 6D6** & **Mr. X** ... **Preston Quinn** beat **Phil Brown** ... **Timber** beat **The Stro** in a falls-count-anywhere match to become the heavyweight champion.
(08-16-03)

—Thomas Maurer

WINSTON-SALEM—New Empire Wrestling at the VFW Hall: **Brass Munkey** & **American Steel Ninja** defeated **Wayne Insane** & **Redd** ... **Ric Converse** pinned **Alan Rage** ... National champion **J-Money** pinned **Ouga Bouga** ... **Corey Edsel** defeated **GeeStar** by submission ... **Matt Houston** & **Kurt Solo** defeated **Brad Rainz** & **Brad Attitude** to win the tag team title ... **Scotty Matthews** wrestled **Rob McBride** to a no-contest
(08-10-03)

—Grant Sawyer

PFAFFTOWN—United Pro Wrestling Coalition at West Central Community Center: **Righteous Rider** defeated **American Shadow** ... **J. Marcus Lawson** defeated **Sweet Daddy** ... **Grease** & **Crash Test** defeated **The SouthSide Playas** by disqualification ... Carolina champion **Mr. Smooth** defeated **Aaron Devil** and **John Thundercloud** in a triangle match ... Tag team champs **The Wild-Eyed Southern Boys** defeated **James Reno** & **Indian Outlaw** ... **Scotty Matthews** defeated **Ironhorse** to win the vacant heavyweight title.
(08-02-03)

—Tara Rheaume

OHIO

LORAIN—Mega Championship Wrestling at Sports -N- Stuff: **Adam Cage** defeated **The Bouncer** ... **Perry Greene** & **Davin Starr** defeated **The Deviant** & **Krazy Kid Bielick** ... **Ray Right** defeated **Shawn Blaze** ... **Super Destroyer III** defeated **Brandon X** in a street fight ... **Alcatraz** & **Aero** defeated **Christian Faith** & **Immaculate JDB** ... **Glenn Spectre** defeated **Jake Garrett** ... **Dick Trimmins** defeated **Jason Turner** ... Light heavyweight champ **Fabulous** defeated **Spence Slater** ... **J-Rocc** wrestled **Sean Styles** to a no-contest for the U.S. title.
(08-15-03)

—Frank Miller

DAYTON—Ring of Honor at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds: **Special K** defeated **The Carnage Crew**, **Fast Eddie** & **Don Juan**, and **Joel** & **Jose Maximo** ... **Nigel McGuinness** defeated **Chet Jablonski** ... **Homicide** beat **Chris Sabin** ... **Colt Cabana** & **Ace Steel** defeated **Alex Shelley** & **Jimmy Jacobs** ... **Matt Stryker** defeated **Justin Credible** ... **Michael Shane** won a four-corners survival match over **Scoot Andrews**, **Hotstuff Hernandez**, and **Slyk**

Wagner Brown ... **Jimmy Rave** defeated **Slim J** ... Heavyweight champion **Samoa Joe** defeated **B.J. Whitmer** ... Tag team champions **A.J. Styles** & **Homicide** (replacing the injured **Red**) defeated **Christopher Daniels** & **Danny Maff**.
(08-09-03)

—Maria Isabel

PENNSYLVANIA

ALTOONA—Keystone Championship Wrestling at the KCW Arena: **Kasanova Kato** pinned **The Insaniac** ... **Zubov** pinned Central Pennsylvania champ **Mercury Flash** in a non-title match ... **Bill Bain** & **Scott Fowler** and **Da Munchies** wrestled to a draw ... **Extreme** defeated tag team champs **Youth Gone Wild** to win the belts ... **Zubov** pinned **Kasanova Kato** ... **Big Lenny** defeated **Doug Diggler** & **Eric Roberts** in a no-disqualification handicap match ... Heavyweight champ **Sebastian** defeated **Julio Dinero**, **Dr. Feelgood**, and **Matt Vandal** in an elimination match.
(08-23-03)

—Matt Bish

WEST MIFFLIN—International Wrestling Cartel at CCAC South Campus: **Supreme Lee Great** beat **Al B. Damm** ... **Jimmy Jacobs** beat **Alex Shelley** ... Heavyweight champion **Dennis Gregory** beat **Dustin Ardine** ... **Sterling Keenan** beat **Ray Right** ... **B.J. Whitmer** defeated **Dean Radford** ... **Eric Angle** beat **Bubba the Bulldog** ... Super indy champion **Colt Cabana** wrestled **A.J. Styles** to a 20-minute time-limit draw ... Tag team champions **Devil Bhudakahn** & **Glenn Spectre** beat **M-Dogg 20** & **Josh Prohibition** ... **Shark Boy** pinned **Carlton Kaz** ... **Eric Xtasy** beat **The Mysterious X** by disqualification ... **Super Hentai** defeated **Shirley Doe** in a Texas death match
(08-23-03)

—Joe Dombrowski

ALLENTOWN—CHIKARA at St. John's Lutheran Auditorium: **Jack Marciano** beat **Gran Akuma** by disqualification ... **Blind Rage** defeated **Jolly Roger** ... **UltraMantis** pinned Young Lions Cup champion **Hallowicked** in a non-title match ... **Eddie Kingston** defeated **Icarus** ... **Mike Quackenbush** & **Sumie Sakai** defeated **Jigsaw** & **Rorschach**.
(08-16-03)

—Timothy A. Walker

McKEESPORT—NWA East at the Sportatorium: **J.B. Destiny** & **Scott Venom** defeated **Da Munchies** ... **Dash Bennett** defeated **Jason Cage** ... Brass knuckles champion **Brian Anthony** defeated **Bigg** by disqualification ... Tag team champions **X-Rated** defeated **J.B. Destiny** & **Scott Venom** ... **Scotty Gash** wrestled to a no-contest with **Daron Smythe** ... **Crusher Hansen** & **Justin Idol** defeated **Dirk Ciglar** & **Nikita Allanov**.
(08-16-03)

—Bill Hermes

PHILADELPHIA—3PW at the Electric Factory: **Ricky Vega** defeated **C.J. O'Doyle** ... **Rob Eckos** defeated **Roadkill** ... **Nick Berk** & **Damian Adams** defeated **Monsta Mack** & **Rockin' Rebel** ... **Joey Matthews** beat **Mike Kruel** ... **Striker** defeated **The Blue Meanie** ... **The Sandman** defeated **Gary Wolfe** ... **Josh Daniels** beat **Kid Kash** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Justin Credible** defeated **Terry Funk**.
(08-16-03)

—Allen Sutter

GILBERTSVILLE—World Wide Wrestling Alliance at Zern's Farmers' Market: **Ykuski** defeated **The Metal Maniac** ... **Senor Negro** defeated **Mr. X** in a mask vs. mask match ... **Fuzion** defeated **Nightprowler** & **Arkam** ... Women's champ **Tiffani Monroe** defeated **Summer Heat** ... **Johnny Law** defeated **Glen Osbourne** ... **Heartbreaker** beat **Jack Hammer** ... **Demetrious Arion** beat **Johnny Graham**.
(08-09-03)

—Hank Mummey

READING—World Professional Wrestling at the Riverside Beneficial Association: **Moondog Molsonn** won a 15-man battle royal ... Light heavyweight champion **Vince Bono** pinned **Greg Spitz** ... **Din Mak** pinned **Steve the Teacher** ... Tag team champions **The Himalayan Playas** beat **The Hooch Holler Boys** and **The Mest Brothers** in a three-way match ... **Krash Krew I** pinned **Jeff Grippley** ... **Rob Eckos** pinned **Damien Adams** ... **New Wave** pinned **Mike Rains** ... **Simply Luscious** defeated **Psycho Bitch** to win the vacant ladies title ... U.S. champion **Flamingo Kid Pinky** beat **Dino Divine** ... Heavyweight champion **Rapid Fire Maldonado** pinned **Moondog Molsonn**.
(08-08-03)

—Barry J. Walker

LITITZ—Christian Wrestling Federation at the Recreation Center: **Shawn Osbourne** defeated **Quentin Lee** to win the Texas title ... **MACE** defeated **Wildman Wes Word** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Chris Idol** ... **Larry Green** pinned **Tim Storm** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned CWF heavyweight champion **Scottie Wrenn** to win the title.
(08-02-03)

—Travis Mckeon

SOUTH CAROLINA

ANDERSON—Universal Championship Wrestling at the Civic Center: **Dave Taylor** defeated **Chris Marlin** ... **Glacier** beat **Mack Truck** ... **Johnny Swinger** defeated **Chris Hamrick** ... **Damien Blaze** beat **Steve Sellers** ... **NWO Sting** beat **Disco Inferno** ... **Johnny Swinger** beat **Jeff Lewis** ... **Sgt. Buddy Lee Parker** defeated **Dave Taylor** ... **Disco Inferno** beat **Chris Marlin** ... **Chris Hamrick** beat **Sonny Siaki** ... Hardcore champion **The Shooter** defeated **Damien Blaze**, **Cruiser Lewis**, and **Norton Lewis** in a four-way match ... **Perry Saturn** defeated **Mike Sanders**.
(08-09-03)

—Danny Paris & Dominick Valenti

TENNESSEE

CHATTANOOGA—WWE at McKenzie Arena: **Scott Steiner** defeated **Test** ... **Mark Henry** & **Rodney Mack** beat **Garrison Cade** & **Mark Jindrak** ... **Lance Storm** defeated **Tommy Dreamer** ... **The Hurricane** & **Trish Stratus** beat **Rico** & **Jackie Gayda** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** beat **Chris Jericho** and **Maven** in a three-way match ... **Buh Buh Ray, D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... **Bill Goldberg** defeated Raw champion **Triple-H** by disqualification ... **Bill Goldberg** & **Maven** beat **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** ... **Rob Van Dam** defeated **Kane** in a steel cage match (**Eric Bischoff** was the guest referee).
(09-07-03)

—Frank Miller

MEMPHIS—WWE at the Pyramid: Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Val Venis** ... **The Hurricane**, **Rosey**, **Garrison Cade**, & **Mark Jindrak** beat **Mark Henry**, **Rodney Mack**, **Rico**, & **Steven Richards** ... **Scott Steiner** beat **Test** ... Women's champion **Molly Holly** beat **Trish Stratus** and **Jazz** in a three-way match ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Maven** ... **Buh Buh Ray, D-Von**, & **Spike Dudley** beat **Rene Dupree**, **Sylvan Grenier**, & **Rob Conway** ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Jerry**

The Undertaker lost to The Big Show by countout, though not before getting the satisfaction of wrapping his huge right hand around the seven-footer's throat.

Don't think Tajiri has forgotten that Rhyno screwed him out of the ECW TV title in 2000, and beat him for the U.S. title in 2001. He got some delayed revenge with a quick win here.

Lawler defeated **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** ... **Kane** defeated **Rob Van Dam** in a steel cage match.
(08-29-03)

—Matt Brock

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **B.G. James**, **Ron Killings**, & **Konnan** beat **Shane Douglas**, **Sinn**, & **Slash** ... **Sonny Siaki** pinned **D-Lo Brown** ... NWA-TNA X champion **Michael Shane** pinned **Jerry Lynn** ... **Abyss** defeated **The Sandman** ... **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** defeated NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** to win the title ... **Glenn Gilberti** beat **Dusty Rhodes** in a bullrope match ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Raven** ... ***In matches taped for airing on the September 3 pay-per-view:*** **Jeff Jarrett**, **Chris Harris**, **James Storm**, **D-Lo Brown**, & **Raven** defeated **Simon Diamond**, **Johnny Swinger**, **A.J. Styles**, **Christopher Daniels**, & **Shane Douglas** in a "War Games" match ... ***Semifinal X Cup matches:*** **Chris Sabin** defeated **Frankie Kazarian** ... **Juventud Guerrera** beat **Teddy Hart** ... ***Finals:*** Sabin beat Guerrera to win the tournament.
(08-27-03)

—Mindy McDermott

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **Michael Shane** defeated **Frankie Kazarian** and **Chris Sabin** in an "Ultimate X" match to win the vacant NWA-TNA X title ... **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** beat NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** in a non-title double-bullrope match ... **Sinn** & **Slash** defeated **C.M. Punk** & **Julio Dinero** ... **Jeff Jarrett** & **Erik Watts** defeated **Christopher Daniels** & **Legend** ... **Raven** won a 13-man gauntlet match to earn a shot at the NWA heavyweight title ... ***In quarterfinal X Cup matches taped for airing on the September 3 pay-per-view:*** **Frankie Kazarian** defeated **Michael Shane** ... **Chris Sabin** beat **Jerry Lynn** ... **Teddy Hart** beat **Jonny Storm** ... **Juventud Guerrera** beat **Nosawa**.
(08-20-03)

—Harry Burkett

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **B.G. James**, **Ron Killings**, & **Konnan** defeated **Devon Storm**, **Sinn**, & **Vampire Warrior** (a.k.a. **Gangrel**) ... **Jerry Lynn** defeated **Elix Skipper** ... **Michael Shane** and **Frankie Kazarian** wrestled to a no-contest in a ladder match ... **Kid Kash** defeated **Bobby Eaton** ... **Raven** pinned **Shane Douglas** ... **Chris Harris**, **James Storm**, & **Dusty Rhodes** beat **Simon Diamond**, **Johnny Swinger**, & **Glenn Gilberti** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Low-Ki**.
(08-13-03)

—Frank Miller

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** in a non-title rawhide whipping match ... **Michael Shane** defeated **Joey Matthews**, **Shark Boy**, and **Danny Doring** in a four-way match to earn a shot at the NWA-TNA X title ... **Kid Kash** pinned **Larry Zbyszko** ... NWA-TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** wrestled to a no-contest with **Frankie Kazarian**, and the title was declared vacant as a result ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** beat **D-Lo Brown** in a steel cage match.
(08-06-03)

—Frank Miller

HUNTSVILLE—Southern Wrestling Alliance at the Scott High School: Women's champion **Tiffani Monroe** & **Silver Shadow** defeated **Sienna Blaze** & **Milly Mascara** ... TV champion **Rage** pinned **C.J. Summers** ... **Johnny Graham** won a battle royal ... **The Weapons of Mass Destruction** defeated tag team champions **Flex** & **Eric Adamz** to win the title ... Heavyweight champion **Jack Diamond** pinned **Johnny Graham**.
(08-02-03)

—Paul Ledbetter

TEXAS

HALTOM CITY—New Age Wrestling Alliance-DFW at the NAWA-DFW Arena: **Chance Romance** defeated **David Fuller** in a streetfight ... **Jeff Brown** defeated **Adam Arson** ... **Ballz Ryder**, **Dick Loin**, & **Seth Shai** defeated **Chuck West**, **Lord Fatality**, & **The Assassin** in a six-man elimination tag team match ... **Jerry Brown** defeated **Chris Richter** to win the DFW title ... **Chris Richter** defeated **Jerry Brown** to win the DFW title
(08-24-03)

—Marion Morrison

LILLIAN—New Generation of Wrestling at the Elementary School: Light heavyweight champion **Ciclone** defeated **Chance Romance** ... **A.J. Dillon** defeated **Viper** ... **The Spoiler** defeated **David Fuller** ... **Total Justice** defeated **The Punishers** ... **Scott Nance**, **Jason X**, & **Bam Bam Moody** defeated **Rick Davidson Jr.**, **Pendragon**, & **Big Van Johnson** ... Heavyweight champion **Blade** defeated **Baseball Bully Terry** in a leather strap lumberjack match.
(08-23-03)

—Marion Morrison

DALLAS—Professional Championship Wrestling at the Speedzone: **C-Diddy** beat **Gabe Roach** by disqualification ... **Scott Putski** pinned **Mike Thunder** ... **Chris Stevens** wrestled **Jared Steele** went to a time-limit draw ... **Mike Foxx** defeated 97.1 KEGL's **Newman** ... **Mike Foxx** pinned **Brett Barnes**.
(08-22-03)

—Rob Moore

FORT WORTH—New Generation of Wrestling at the Worth Heights Community Center: **Pendragon** defeated **Rick Davidson Jr.** ... **Total Justice** defeated **Big Dave** & **Izal** ... **Larry Green** defeated **Biohazard** ... **The Spoiler** defeated **Bam Bam Richardson** ... **The New Legacy** defeated **Master Chief Hi-Way** & **Bam Bam Moody** ... **Ciclone** defeated **Chance Romance** to win the vacant light heavyweight title ... **The Baseball Bullies** & **Payne** defeated **Blade**, **A.J.**, & **Chico Torres**.
(08-16-03)

—Walter Neidermayer

ROCKWALL—Christian Wrestling Federation at the CWF Arena/The Rock Gym: **Mace** won a three-way match over **Manny Domingo** and **Alex Heat** ... **Shiloh** pinned **Chris Idol** ... Light heavyweight champion **Wes Word** defeated **The Great RYU** ... **Ricky Jackson** defeated **Tim Storm**.
(08-16-03)

—Travis McKeon

TYLER—New Age Wrestling Alliance at the NAWA Arena: **Gemini** defeated **Chance Romance** by disqualification ... **Adam Arson** defeated **Charlie Cope** ... **Ellis Hoss** defeated **Sean Cordova** ... **Jerry Brown** defeated **Jeff Brown** to win the NAWA heavyweight title ... **Gemini**, **Bob Mauldon**, & **John Myers** defeated **Khan** & **Hallowmass**.
(08-17-03)

—Millie Workman

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND—NWA Virginia at the Blackwood Rec Center: **Brandon Day** pinned **Trey Owens** ... **Mike Thomas** beat **Prince Malik** ... **Chris Escobar** defeated **Mr. X** ... Tag team champions **Damian Wayne** & **Mike Booth** beat **Biggie Biggs** & **Dirty Money** by disqualification... Heavyweight champion **Preston Quinn** pinned **Magic** ... **Magic**, **Dirty Money**, & **Biggie Biggs** defeated **Preston Quinn**, **Damian Wayne**, & **Mike Booth**.
(08-14-03)

—Dorthy Podsvirow

WISCONSIN

EAU CLAIRE—Bull Power Wrestling at Wagner's Bowling Alley: **Red Lightning** defeated **Steve Stardom** ... **Al Thunder** defeated **Assault** ... **Nathan Sensation** defeated **Renny D** and **Eclipse** ... **Soul Brotha I** defeated **Vegas** ... **Hannibal** defeated **Nathan Sensation** ... **Ian Xavier** defeated **Mad Wolverine** ... **Malice** defeated **Logan Lasher** and **Darkchild** in a three-way barbed-wire match.
(08-23-03)

—Nicholas Loken

LADYSMITH—National Federation of Wrestling at the Fairgrounds: **Nathan Sensation** defeated **Renny D** ... **Adrian Serrano** defeated **J-Real** ... **Tiny Tubbs** defeated **Anicrusix** ... **Shinobi** & **Major Chaos** beat **Red Lightning** & **Darkchild** ... **Red Lightning** defeated **Travis Sharpe** ... **Ace Spade** defeated **Exodus**, **Sledge**, and **Eclipse** in a four-corners match ... **Boogieman** & **Steve Stardom** beat **Tiny Tubbs** & **Amerikid** ... **Darkchild** won a triple threat match against **Logan Lasher** and **Malice** ... **Jim Duggan** pinned **Adrian Lynch** ... **Jim Duggan**, **Red Lightning**, & **Darkchild** defeated **Adrian Lynch**, **Steve Stardom**, & **Malice**.
(08-07-03)

—Nicholas Loken

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY—WWE at the Superdome: **Goldust** pinned **Rodney Mack** ... **Test** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Spike Dudley** & **Trish Stratus** beat **Steven Richards** & **Victoria** ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Christian** ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Rob Van Dam** beat **Ric Flair** & **Randy Orton** ... **Kane** pinned **The Hurricane** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** beat **Chris Jericho** ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** defeated Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** in a non-title table match.
(08-02-03)

—Jason Conlan

SYDNEY—WWE at the Superdome: **Test** pinned **Scott Steiner** ... **The Hurricane** pinned **Rodney Mack** ... **Steven Richards** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Val Venis** ... **Trish Stratus** pinned **Victoria** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Ric Flair** pinned **Shawn Michaels** ... **Chris Jericho** & **Christian** beat **Booker T** & **Goldust** ... **Rob Van Dam** defeated **Kane** by disqualification.
(08-01-03)

—Jason Conlan

MELBOURNE—WWE at Rod Laver Arena: **Scott Steiner** beat **Test** ... **Spike Dudley** beat **Steven Richards** ... **Victoria** pinned **Trish Stratus** ... **The Hurricane** beat **Rodney Mack** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** beat **Christian** ... **Goldust** defeated **Val Venis** ... **Rob Van Dam** beat **Kane** by disqualification ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Kevin Nash** beat **Chris Jericho** & **Randy Orton**.
(07-31-03)

—Jason Conlan

CANADA

CALGARY, ALBERTA—Stampede Wrestling at the Bowness Sportsplex: **Kirk Melnyk** & **Jason Carter** defeat **Dean Durrango** & **Danny Myers** ... **Dave Swift** beat **Kid Nicholls** ... **Johnny Devine** beat **Apocalypse** ... **Nattie Neidhart** won a four-person elimination match against **Belle Lovitz**, **Randy Myers**, and **Marky Starr** ... British Commonwealth mid-heavyweight **Duke Durrango** beat **T.J. Wilson** by disqualification ... **Karnage** defeated **Harry Smith** in the finals of a tournament to declare a new North American champion.
(08-22-03)

—Steven Hawkes

CALGARY, ALBERTA—WWE at the Pengrowth Saddledome: **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Spanky** ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Lance Storm** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons**, **Matt Hardy** & **Shannon Moore**, and **The Basham Brothers** in a four-corners match ... **Sable** beat **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **John Cena** defeated **Billy Gunn** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Rhyno** in a submission match ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** pinned **Brock Lesnar**.
(08-02-03)

—Jon Wood

SARNIA, ONTARIO—WWE at the Sports & Entertainment Centre: **Funaki** pinned **Shannon Moore** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Zach Gowen** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** and **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** in a three-way match ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Rhyno** in a submission match ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Nunzio** ... **Billy Gunn**, **Billy Kidman**, & **Jamie Noble** beat **John Cena** & **The Basham Brothers** ... **Torrie Wilson** defeated **Sable**, **Dawn Marie**, and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** defeated **Brock Lesnar** and **The Big Show** in a three-way match.
(08-18-03)

—John Carter

HAMILTON, ONTARIO—WWE at the Victor Copps Coliseum: **The Basham Brothers** beat **Billy Gunn** & **Jamie Noble** ... **A-Train** pinned **Funaki** ... **Matt Hardy** beat **Zach Gowen** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Tajiri** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rhyno** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Nunzio**, **Shannon Moore**, and **Billy Kidman** in a four-way match ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Nidia**, **Sable**, and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini challenge ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** beat **Brock Lesnar** and **The Big Show** in a three-way match.
(08-17-03)

—Chuck Westbrook

EDMONTON, ALBERTA—WWE at the Skyreach Centre: **Ultimo Dragon** pinned **Spanky** ... U.S. champion **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Matt Hardy** by disqualification ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Bradshaw** & **Ron Simmons** and **The Basham Brothers** in a three-way match ... **Sable** defeated **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Jamie Noble** ... **John Cena** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Rhyno** in a submission match ... Smackdown champion **Kurt Angle** pinned **Brock Lesnar**.
(08-03-03)

—Wayne Messerman

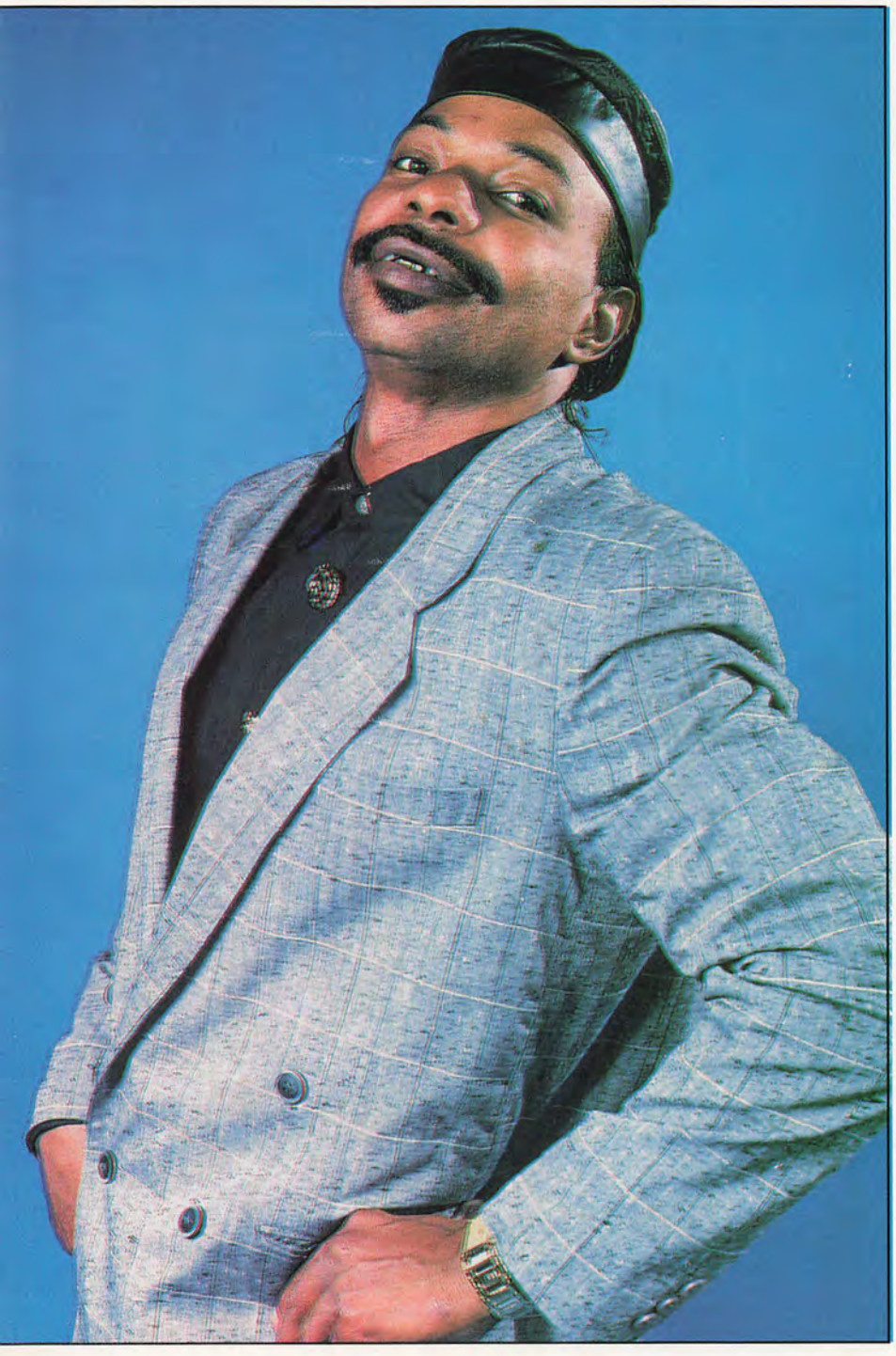
DARTMOUTH, NOVA SCOTIA—Canadian Professional Wrestling at Gray Arena: MSW champion **Tony Armstrong** beat CEW North Atlantic champion **Seaman White** to win the title ... **Chrome** beat **Rebel** ... MSW Inter-city champion **Magnus** beat **Kyle Kruze** by disqualification ... **Robbie McAllister** defeated **Scott Savage** ... **Rebel** beat CWF champion **Coal Miner Chuck** by disqualification in a chain match ... **Rollie McAllister** beat **Shawn Spears** ... **Cryptkeeper** defeated CWF U.S. champion **Dice** to win the title ... **Quinson Valentino** defeated **Chi Chi Cruz**.
(08-02-03)

—Malcolm Brown

As if Brock Lesnar's size and strength advantages weren't enough—he had to blast an overmatched Spanky with a chair, too?! At least Spanky got the win via DQ.

PWI classic

From the October 1989 issue of *The Wrestler*



Deception, Disgrace, And Destiny

THE TEDDY LONG STORY

When he was suspended from refereeing matches in the NWA, many fans thought the Teddy Long story was completed. But the devious Long has now bounced back as a manager, and it looks like this is a saga that is only just beginning

By Liz Hunter

DON'T CALL HIM Teddy Long anymore.

"My name is Theodore R. Long," he now says boldly. "That is the proper way that I am to be addressed. And any references to my past history as a referee will be ignored, I assure you. What happened yesterday is of little concern to me now."

It may be of little concern to him, but it's at the forefront of the minds of those who once honored him with their trust and have come to hate him perhaps more than any man in the NWA.

It wasn't all that long ago that Long had established himself as an arbiter of the first magnitude, a rising star in the ranks of NWA referees.

The first man Teddy, *er,* Theodore Long signed once he became a manager was the massive Norman the Lunatic. That huge key was symbolic of Long supposedly helping Norman get out of a psychiatric facility.

Those days already seem like years ago. Today, Long is a fledgling rule-breaking manager, and it's clear to everyone that he used the fans, wrestlers, and even other NWA officials to further his own career. He's managed to blaze a trail of deception and disgrace, but now he insists he's in firm control of his own destiny.

For most of the past three years, Long learned his craft as one of the top referees during the NWA's televised matches. As he gained experience, he began to foster a great deal of support from both officials and fans as a respected arbiter. Last year, he began to receive important matches at many major NWA cards.

Long received accolades from the national press for his alert work during the Rick Steamboat-Ric Flair NWA World title match on February 20 in Chicago—a match he wasn't even scheduled to referee. The official referee, Tommy Young, had been knocked out in the heat of battle, but Long ran into the ring when Steamboat caught Flair in a small package. The fans exploded with joy when Young recovered and joined Long in raising Steamboat's hand in victory.

"There was never any indication there was anything wrong with the guy at all," said Young, the NWA's senior referee. "He worked hard, and he seemed to be pretty intent on getting top match assignments. He practically begged to referee the NWA World tag team title bout pitting The Road Warriors, who then were champions, against Steve Williams and Mike Rotundo at Ragin' Cajun Clash back on April 2. Little did anybody know what his real intentions were."

Long's actions during that match will go down as one of the biggest controversies of the year. The referee ignored a pinfall attempt by Animal on Rotundo, but sprung into action after Williams ran into the ring and cradled Hawk. He then delivered a three-count that was so fast that it had to be verified on videotape in slow motion.

"There wasn't anything wrong with the count at all," insisted Long after

Long tried to give Butch Reed a favorable decision as a referee ... and not all that long after getting suspended, he would sign on as his manager.

Larry Zbyszko

Ratings

October 1989

TOP 10
1. Hulk Hogan
2. Lex Luger
3. Rick Steamboat
4. Randy Savage
5. Sting
6. Rick Rude
7. Larry Zbyszko
8. Jerry Lawler
9. Larry Cameron
10. Tom Prichard

TAG TEAMS
1. Demolition
2. The Road Warriors
3. Jim Garvin & Michael Hayes
4. Akeem & Big Bossman
5. The Samoan Swat Team
6. The Bushwhackers
7. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane
8. Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard
9. Shaun & Steve Simpson
10. Mike Enos & Wayne Bloom

NWA
World champion: Ric Flair
1. Lex Luger
2. Terry Funk
3. Rick Steamboat
4. Sting
5. The Great Muta
6. Steve Williams
7. Mike Rotundo
8. Eddie Gilbert
9. Terry Gordy
10. Rick Steiner

WWF
World champion: Hulk Hogan
1. Rick Rude
2. Randy Savage
3. Brutus Beefcake
4. The Ultimate Warrior
5. Hacksaw Duggan
6. Jimmy Snuka
7. Dusty Rhodes
8. Curt Hennig
9. Terry Taylor
10. The Honky Tonk Man

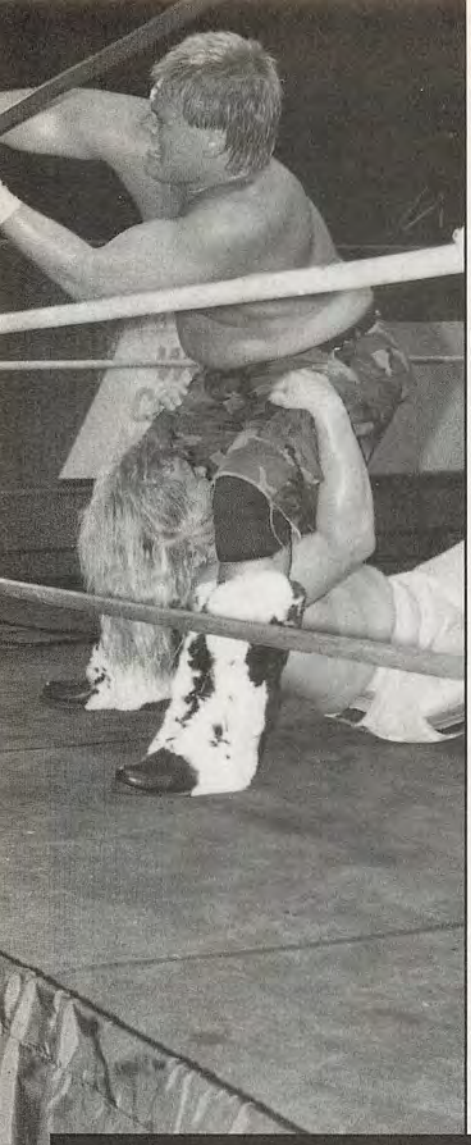
AWA
World champion: Larry Zbyszko
1. Greg Gagne
2. Sgt. Slaughter
3. Akio Sato
4. Ken Patera
5. Col. DeBeers
6. Derrick Dukes
7. Mike George
8. Paul Diamond
9. Tommy Jammer
10. Scott Norton

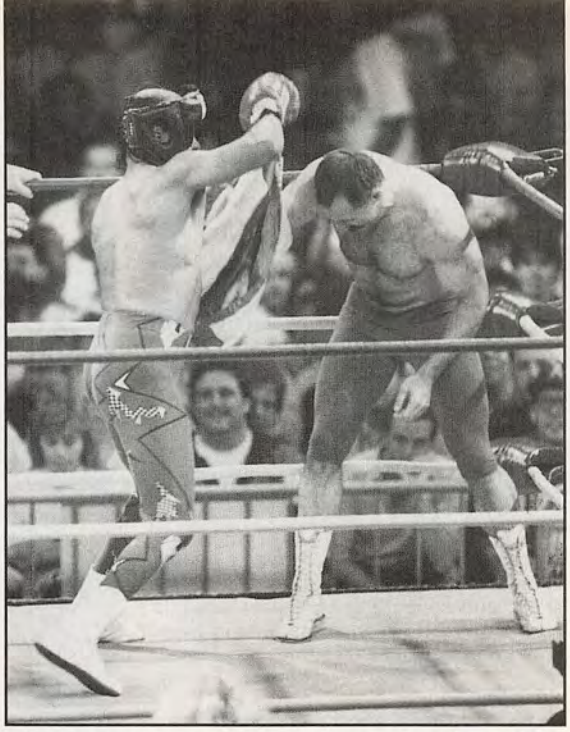
MOST POPULAR
1. Hulk Hogan
2. Sting
3. The Ultimate Warrior
4. Brutus Beefcake
5. Rick Steamboat
6. Hacksaw Duggan
7. Dusty Rhodes
8. Eric Embry
9. Rick Steiner
10. Jeff Jarrett

MOST HATED
1. Randy Savage
2. Terry Funk
3. Lex Luger
4. Rick Rude
5. Zeus
6. The Great Muta
7. Larry Zbyszko
8. Big Bossman
9. Jerry Lawler
10. Dynamite Kid

the bout. "I couldn't make my way over to count out Rotundo because Animal had injured my back by shoving me to the canvas. Hey, I'm an official referee, and my decision is law. Williams and Rotundo are the new champions. That's all there is to it."

But that wasn't the extent of Long's chicanery. Six days later in New Haven, Connecticut, Long officiated a match pitting U.S. tag team champions Eddie Gilbert and Rick Steiner against The Iron Sheik and Butch Reed. Long blatantly ignored the Sheik's flagbearer, Rip Morgan, as the New Zealander handed a flagstaff to Reed. The man known as "Hacksaw" used it to kayo Gilbert, and Long counted yet another quick





After becoming a manager, Long became such a problem that he got dragged into a hair vs. hair match with Paul Ellering in May 1990. He lost in less than two minutes.

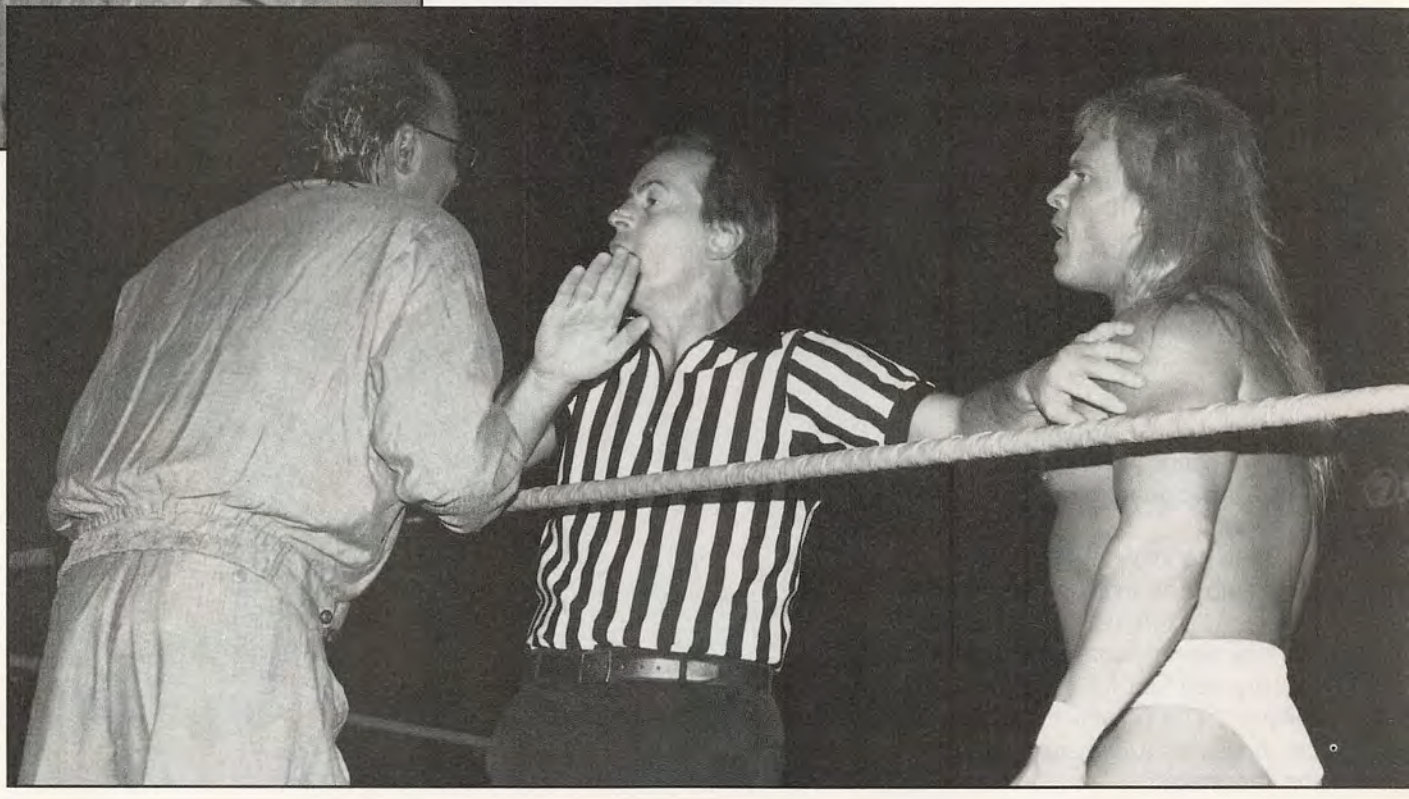
pinfall. The referee even handed the belts to Sheik and Reed, but the victory was disallowed by an incensed Young.

"Right then, we all realized something was seriously wrong with the guy," recalled Young. "We couldn't ascertain that someone was paying him off, but he certainly was no longer the impartial, fair referee he once was. The NWA's Board of Directors decided to ban him from officiating title matches after that, but when he ignored blatant outside interference during three additional televised matches, they had no option but to ban him outright. We all thought we had seen the last of him."

Young, like everyone else, figured that Long would fade away in disgrace after being suspended, but soon after that, he began appearing at ringside for several matches. He was taking notes, scribbling every bit of information he could into a small reporter's notebook.

"I have a perfect right to be at ringside," said Long after one of his first

Senior NWA referee Tommy Young didn't appreciate his former colleague distracting Steve Casey during a match (below). Soon, Long did more than distract: He blatantly helped Jack Victory against Bobby Eaton (left).



A decade after getting canned as a referee in the NWA, Teddy was back officiating for WWE, and supporting his fellow refs in a brief "strike." Now, once again, he is Theodore Long, manager.

ringside appearances. "Although the fools that run this federation cannot see my value as a referee, I applied for a manager's license, and they had no legal means to deny me. I'm scouting all the talent I can get my eyes on, and it won't be long before I shock the world with my latest discoveries."

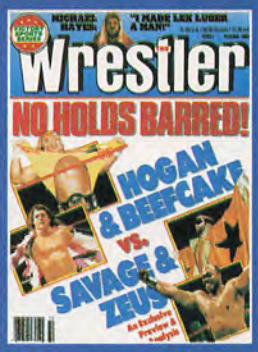
Shock may be an understatement. Long's first protege, the 380-pound Norman the Lunatic, is a huge madman whom Long claims to have assisted in releasing from a psychiatric hospital. He's also formed the tag team of Sid Vicious and Dan Spivey, whom he has dubbed The Skyscrapers, and insists that he's continually on the search for new talent.

"Those idiot fans thought they saw the last of me when I was suspended," he laughed. "But that ban was the best thing that ever happened to me. Now, instead of being a low-paid, ignored referee, I'm gonna be the greatest manager this sport has ever seen. My destiny is in my own hands now, and I ain't gonna let this opportunity slip through my fingers."

Teddy Long has written one of the most embarrassing chapters in NWA history. As a referee, he was responsible for some disgraceful decisions that denied worthy men their just rewards. The potential damage he can cause as a manager is beyond the imagination. □

The Wrestler, October 1989

The cover: The war between Hulk Hogan and Zeus, which started on the set of the movie *No Holds Barred,* had shifted to the rings of the WWF, and *The Wrestler* offered a full preview of Hogan and Brutus Beefcake vs. Zeus and Randy Savage at SummerSlam '89 in the cover story. After closely examining factors such as physical attributes, overall ability, and intangibles, we predicted a decisive win for Hogan and Beefcake. And that's what we ended up getting!



Horses Of A Different Company? In retrospect, it was probably a bit of a stretch, though at the time, it seemed like a reasonable, yet complicated conspiracy theory.

When ex-Horseman Barry Windham confirmed he had just signed with the WWF, already the employer of former Horsemen Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard and former Horsemen manager (then-WWF talent scout) J.J. Dillon, we thought we were about to see the first WWF version of legendary NWA clique The Four Horsemen. Too bad there was nothing to our theory.

Maker Of Men: A lot of NWA fans were disappointed when Lex Luger turned heel by sneak-attacking Rick Steamboat. The man who had just lost the U.S. title to Luger, Michael Hayes, was anything but. He was thrilled ... and proud. Hayes claimed that he was to blame (or thank) for the change in Luger, that wrestling a series of matches against him had taught Luger what it really took to get ahead in wrestling. "I changed him into a man—a real man!" Hayes asserted.

Quick (And Logical) Fix: The World Class territory was in turmoil in 1989, and although Assistant Editor Eddie Ellner favored heels in his stories and columns, he made a good point when he wrote that the decision not to force the popular Eric Embry to leave immediately after he dropped a loser-leaves-town match to Gary Young had a lot to do with the madness. Instead, he was allowed to fulfill contractual obligations and ended up beating Tojo Yamamoto to win controlling interest of the promotion. Maybe banning Embry was a good suggestion.

So Much For Retirement: Billy Jack Haynes was ready to leave wrestling for good in 1989, but a guy named The Grappler wouldn't allow him to walk away quietly. He interrupted the Pacific Northwest star's retirement ceremony and mocked Haynes' blind and wheelchair-bound father. Soon, Haynes was a full-time wrestler again, bent on gaining revenge on Grappler, Scotty the Body (Raven), and a few others. He discussed the incident, his future, and more in "Q & A."

BACK ISSUES OF THE Wrestler

Don't miss a single issue of the magazine that has thrilled wrestling fans for two generations, THE WRESTLER! Complete your collection of the most respected wrestling publication in the world! Supplies are limited, so don't delay—order today!

July 1995: Hulk Hogan's Contract With America. Also: Marty Jannetty, Brian Pillman, Lawrence Taylor, Bill Dundee.

Oct. 1995: President Backlund?! Also: Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas, Gordon Solie.

Nov. 1995: If Savage Can't Silence Flair, He's Through! Also: Jarrett-Ramon, Mabel, Hogan & Renegade, WWF legends roundtable.

Dec. 1995 (Special Issue): Shawn Michaels: Too Good To Be Second Best! Also: Wrestling rulebook, Vega-Ramon, Mama Cornette, Kamala-Duggan, Big Van Vader.

Winter 1995: Exclusive Preview: Sting vs. Hogan: This Time It's For Real! Also: Steiners, Yankem-Undertaker, Bodies-Cornette, Arn Anderson.

May 1996: WWF In-Vader! Can Bret, Shawn, & Razor Play The Pain Game? Also: Public Enemy, Steve Austin, wrestling oddities, Kensuke Sasaki, Ric Flair.

June 1996 (Special Issue): Fear Of Height! How The Giant Is Paralyzing Wrestling. Also: Shock 'n' Wrestling, Razor Ramon, Brian Pillman, Konnan.

Aug. 1996: Shawn Michaels: Finally—He Has The Title ... Now Here's What He's Gotta Do With It! Also: Public Enemy-Nastys, Bret Hart, Booty Man-Sullivan, Mabel.

Sept. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Savio Vega, Sabu-Scorpio, Chris Benoit, Goldust, Olympians, Giant.

Oct. 1996: Muscling Back To The Top: The Warrior Is Ready To Rule Again. Also: Warriors & Sasaki-Steiners & Norton, Razor & Diesel, Mabel & Mo, Blue Meanie.

Nov. 1996: Brian Pillman: Next WWF Champ! Also: Giant-Sting, Ray Stevens, Dick Murdoch, Cloudy, John Tenta, WCW shuffle.

Dec. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Ric Flair, Mero & Sable, Goldust, Sandman.

Holiday 1996: WCW Shocker: Randy Savage Is Set To Join Hulk Hogan's NWO! Also: Steve Austin, Michaels-Goldust, Arn Anderson, Van Dam-Sabu, Steve Williams.

Jan. 1997: It Could Happen! Hogan's Next Move ... Buy WCW! Also: Undertaker, New Jack, Owen-Bulldog, Ted DiBiase.

Feb. 1997: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1997 Has In Store For Them! Also: Michaels-Hart, Pit Bull I, Rey Misterio Jr., Kevin Nash.

July 1997: Infighting, Politics, Egos: Is The NWO Losing Its Edge? Also: WWF-ECW, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney, Jerry Lawler.

Nov. 1997: 10-Year Grudge! Lex Luger's Career Ruined By J.J. Dillon? Also: Shawn-Bret, Jeff Jarrett, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Guerreros, Taz, Syxx, Paul Bearer, Brian Christopher.

Hol. 1997: First Owen ... Then 'Taker ... Then Hogan: Who's Gonna Go Next? Also: Steve Austin, Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, Dean Malenko.

April 1998: "We've Won!" Maybe ... But Can The NWO Handle Its Own Success? Also: Ken Shamrock, Steiners-Warriors, Douglas & Francine, Rocky Maivia.

May 1998: Mike Tyson: Stepping Into Wrestling Hell! Also: Bischoff-Bret-Zbyszko, Meng & Barbarian, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, ECWA ladder match.

June 1998: Hollywood Hogan: 10 More Dirty Deeds ... And Then He's Outta Here! Also: De-Generation X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, yesterday and today.

July 1998: Death Wish! Costing Hogan The Title Isn't Enough For The Macho Man: What's Next? Also: Ric Flair, Headbangers-Rock 'n' Rolls, Chris Chetti, Mero & Sable.

Aug. 1998: We Stand Behind Ya, Vince! It's Time To Fire Austin. Also: Luna-Sable, Randy Savage, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney.

Sept. 1998 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Nash-Hogan, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg, Antonio Inoki.

Oct. 1998: The Mother Of All Pay-Per-Views! A WWF-WCW Supercard Is No Longer Just Talk! Also: Sable, Undertaker, Randy Savage, Sabu & Van Dam.

Nov. 1998: Demons Be Damned! Sting Makes The Giant See Red! Also: McMahon-Dude, Jarrett-Blackman, Melanie Pillman, Rey Misterio Jr.

Dec. 1998 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: ECW midyear report, Ric Flair, Kane.

Hol. 1998: "Quit, Mick!" A Desperate Plea From A Distraught Wife. Also: Chris Jericho, Jason Sensation, wrestlers vs. celebrities, hardcore war.

Jan. 1999: Stone-Cold's Personal Survivor Series. Also: Rock-HHH, NWA, Bret Hart, Howard Finkel, three-way title matches.

Feb. 1999: Hot Rocks! The Anger That Drives Shamrock & The Rock. Also: McMahon-Austin, Spike Dudley, Eric Bischoff, Perry Saturn.

March 1999 (Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Pictures. Also: Hall & Nash, Goldust, Mr. Ooh La La, The Undertaker.

April 1999: Hogan's Retirement: White House Or White Lie? Also: DDP-Hart, Taz-Douglas, Steve Austin, Mankind.

May 1999: Team Coverage: The NWO Reunion! Also: Kane-McMahon, Dallas Page, Funk-Abdullah, WWF sideshow.

June 1999 (Special Issue): Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through. Also: Rocky Maivia, Juventud Guerrera, Billy Gunn, body parts quiz section.

July 1999: Our Bottom Line ... It's High Time Austin Shows McMahon Respect! Also: Jerry Lawler, Rey Misterio Jr., Ken Shamrock, DDP-Bigelow-Goldberg.

Aug. 1999: This Man Is Pure Evil! Trust Hogan And He'll Take You To Hell! Plus: Owen Hart, Vader, Sable.

Sept. 1999 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: DDP-Sting, Douglas-Credible, Big Show-McMahons, Disco Inferno, Keim & Lane.

Oct. 1999: Shawn Michaels' Game Of Corporate Chess! Are The McMahons His Pawns? Also: Steiners, Billy Gunn, Savage & George.

Nov. 1999: Austin's New Powers: Shag Vince? Yeah, Baby! Also: Arn-Sid, Hardy Boys, Ernest Miller, Naoya Ogawa.

Dec. 1999 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: ECW midyear report, David & Ric Flair, Test & Stephanie.

Hol. 1999: Before The WWF Can Sell ... Read What They Had To Tell! Also: Kanyon, Big Show, Spike & Mahoney-Axl & New Jack, Kevin Nash.

Jan. 2000: An Insider's Analysis: Why The Guys Can't Handle Chyna. Also: Revolution, ECW expansion, Guerrero & Misterio, WWF/WCW/ECW women.

Feb. 2000: When Will Mankind Finally Tell The Rock ... "Put A Sock In It"? Also: Goldberg, Chris Jericho, Sabu, Harlem Heat.

Apr. 2000: Can The WWF Survive Without Steve Austin? Also: Dawn Marie-Francine, Meng, Big Show, Madusa.

May 2000: StePHONY: The Most Mistrusted McMahon Of All! Also: Harlem Heat & Midnight, David & Ric Flair, Kurt Angle, Rhino.

June 2000 (Special Issue): The Rock: No. 1 On The Jabroni Hit List! Also: Awesome-Van Dam, Kurt Angle, Vampiro, federation jumpers, book of lists.

July 2000: Tori/Torrie, What's The Story? How They Rank In 10 Crucial Categories. Also: Big Show, Tank Abbott, Too Cool, Rhodes-Dreamer, Jeff Jarrett.

Aug. 2000: We're Con-Vinced! This Attack Saved The WWF! Also: Lex Luger, Radicals, Sandman & Rhino, Cyrus.

Sept. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF Mid-Year Report. Also: Mike Awesome, Nova & Chetti, Paul Wight, Chyna, Dr. Sam Sheppard.

Oct. 2000: Is Chyna Robbing Eddie Of His Latino Heat? Also: Abbott-Steiner, Scotty Too Hotty, Rob Van Dam, David Flair.

Nov. 2000: Special Fear Issue—Rock-Benoit, Ric Flair, HBK. Also: ECW mid-year report, Bill Goldberg.

Dec. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Goldberg-Triple-H, Daffney, Christian & Edge, Jeff Peterson.

(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE JANUARY 2001 ISSUE)

Jan. 2001: WWF Brat-titude! Does Steph Always Get Her Way? Not On Your Life! Also: Lance Storm, Mick Foley, Goldberg, Steve Corino, Steve Blackman, Torrie Wilson.

March 2001: Triple-H & The Rock: 10 Reasons They Should Trust Each Other ... 10 Reasons They Should Not! Also: Scott Steiner, Chris Candido, Rob Van Dam, McMahon-ECW, Steven Richards, WCW factions.

May 2001: Do Anything You Want, Stone-Cold: We Can't Hate You. Also: Kronic, Rikishi, Steve Corino, Goldberg, Edge & Christian, Kane.

July 2001: Jerichoholics Beware! Serious Withdrawal Symptoms Are In Store! Also: Tajiri, Steph-Test, Undertaker, Mike Awesome, WCW Elite, Albert.

Sept. 2001: The Rock's Choice: Honor Over Glory! Also: WrestleMania X-Seven, Undertaker-Triple-H, Shane-WCW, TCL II, Scott Hall, Vince McMahon, Chris Jericho.

Nov. 2001: Goldberg! Da Man Who Could Make Or Break Wrestling! Also: Dudleys, Steve Corino, Chris Benoit, Dusty Rhodes, Lita, WWF top tier.

Jan. 2002: Can The Rock Handle The Unrelenting Pressure Of Fame? Also: RVD, Paul Heyman, Terry Gordy, Flash-Jericho, Tajiri-Tazz, WWF-Alliance

March 2002: Outsiders Looking In! Hall & Nash Take Aim At The WWF! Also: Ivory, Austin-Angle, Christian-Edge, what's ahead in '02.

May 2002: Ric Flair: 10 Reasons He Terrifies Vince McMahon. Also: Undertaker, Jeff Hardy, Survivor Series, S.A.T., report cards.

July 2002: Hail The NWO ... But Don't Forget The N-W-Woes! Also: Edge, Billy & Chuck, Leviathon, Jericho-Flair, Goldust.

Sept. 2002: What's Left? Hulk Hogan's Five Remaining Tasks. Also: Steve Austin, Kurt Angle, Rey Misterio Jr., Jeff Peterson, WWF draft.

Nov. 2002: Who's Next? The Stars That Could Replace Stone-Cold. Also: Torrie Wilson, Davey Boy Smith, Ken Shamrock, Funk-Abdullah-Rhodes-Sullivan, WWE shockers, indy roulette.

Jan. 2003: War Games! WWE Is Out Of Control ... And Vinnie Mac Loves It! Also: Rey Misterio Jr., A.J. Styles, Rikishi-Gangrel, The Rock, Christian.

March 2003: The WrestleMania XIX We Want To See! Also: Terry Funk, Rey Misterio Jr., Nidia, NWA-TNA, what's ahead in '03.

May 2003: A Permanent Replacement For The Rock? Book It! Also: Smackdown, Joanie & Syxx-Pac, Raw report cards, Shawn Michaels, Victoria.

July 2003: In Tune With Steve Austin—A Comprehensive Guide To Stone-Cold's Red-Hot Comeback. Also: Kurt Angle, Amazing Red, The Sheik, Bill DeMott, Al Snow, Ric Flair.

Sept. 2003: Goldberg's Golden Road To WWE. Also: Hardys, Chance Beckett, Kevin Nash, WrestleMania "B" card, *Playboy*-WWE.

Nov. 2003: The Women Of Wrestling—Do We Expect Too Much From Their Bodies? Also: A.J. Styles, Freddie Blassie, Goldberg, Stacy Keibler, evolution of wrestling.

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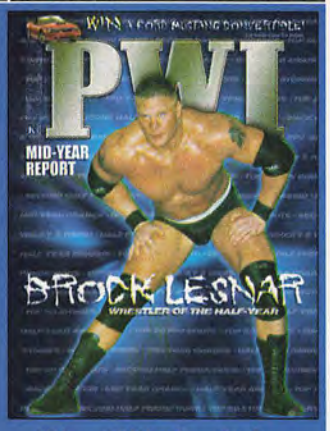
Letters preceded by a ☎ indicate letters left by fans on the *PWI* Hotline (1-900-226-4PWI; see ad elsewhere in this issue).

MID-YEAR GRADES ARE IN...



With our "Mid-Year Report" in the October issue, we tried to give a solid assessment of recent events, a snapshot of wrestling's current state, and an indication of where the business is headed. It wasn't our intent to create controversy, but readers offered strong opinions nonetheless.

"It looks as if the Internet crowd's brand of political correctness has polluted *PWI*," wrote Robert Purnell of Reno, Nevada. "Triple-H was the Raw champion during the first six months of 2003, the entire evaluation period for the 'Mid-Year Report.' He, not Brock Lesnar, deserved to be Wrestler of the Half-Year."

Mike Lannoff of Englewood, New Jersey, questioned our ranking of the top 50 stories of the half-year. "Where are your priorities?" he asked. "Sable's return to WWE was more important than the deaths of Elizabeth, Freddie Blassie, and The Sheik? Shame on you, *PWI*!"

"I'd like to know how The Hurricane earned an 'A' for his corny gimmic," stated James Arnot of Kansas City, Kansas, regarding our "Grades Are In" feature. "When my friends are over, and The Hurricane is on TV, I'm ashamed to be a wrestling fan. Ditto for his sidekick, Rosey."

CREDIT TO MANKIND

I would just like to thank *PWI* for the wonderful interview with Mick Foley ("Press Conference," October 2003). Fans must remember that The Rock, Triple-H, and Steve Austin are not the only men who have made pro wrestling great. The real working men's wrestlers—Foley, Harley Race, Dusty Rhodes, and others—are too quickly forgotten. These are men who have given all they have to the sport—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

More than ever, wrestling needs stars like Foley, who pour their hearts and souls into believable characters. Foley gave 100 percent throughout his career, whether that was in WWE, ECW, WCW, Texas, or Japan. His dedication to the business, even though he is retired, was quite evident in your interview.

Thank you, Mr. Foley, for countless wonderful memories. I hope you will give us more in the near future.

MITCH VERNATTI
Mcv94@aol.com

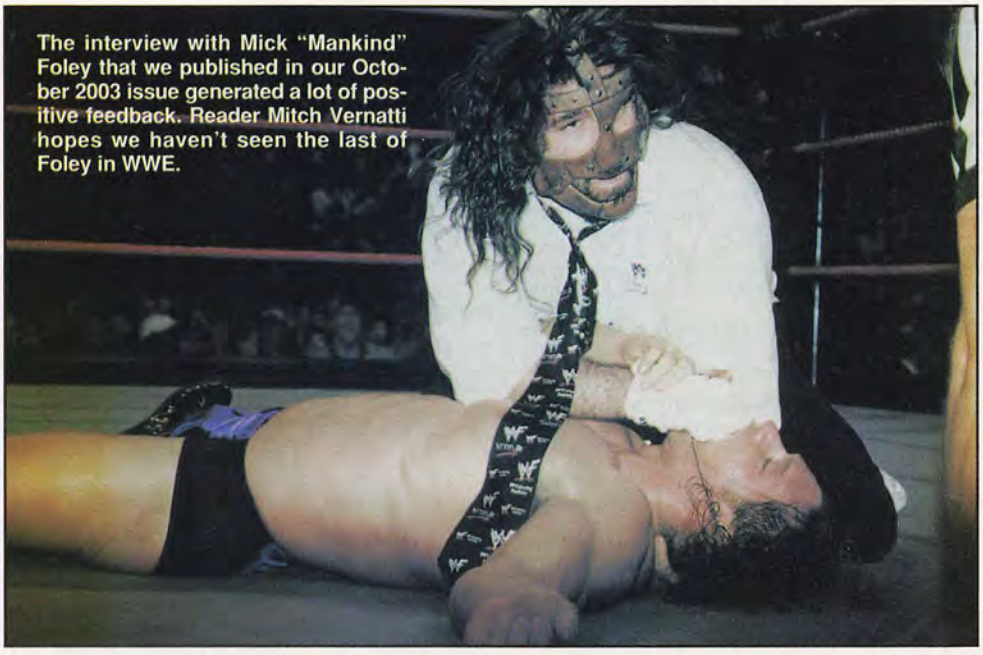
NO STRAIGHT SHOT

After reading Dan Murphy's "Straight Shooter" column in your October 2003 issue, I have finally figured out why women's wrestling is not taken seriously in the United States. How could Mr. Murphy possibly believe that Trish Stratus is the best female wrestler in the U.S.?

In my opinion, Trish is one of the worst female wrestlers today. I don't care about her win-loss record, or her win at WrestleMania XIX. I consider her the female Jeff Hardy: She blows at least one move in every match. Obviously, people can't see past the two pieces of plastic on her chest.

I don't understand why Trish was ranked ahead of other women on Murphy's list, especially Ivory. If Trish is the "new standard," as Murphy asserts, we can expect the women's division to fail again.

HOLDEN MNUTZ
Holden_mnutz@yahoo.com



The interview with Mick "Mankind" Foley that we published in our October 2003 issue generated a lot of positive feedback. Reader Mitch Vernatti hopes we haven't seen the last of Foley in WWE.

"FAMILY" REUNION

On August 3, I had the pleasure of meeting Sable and Eddie Guerrero at an autograph session in Edmonton. Despite my nervous jabbering, I managed to tell Sable how much I loved and respected the wrestling business. I told her that I had spent 22 years watching this crazy sport and that I would die for any WWE superstar. Yes, I am a real sap.

I went on to tell Eddie that I was proud he had overcome his personal demons, and I even mentioned that my letter about his dearly departed mullet was published in the June 2003 issue of *PWI*. Eddie replied that he hadn't read it. That was a shame, because it was quite entertaining. Then we butted fists to say goodbye. My only regret is that I didn't get to hug either Eddie or Sable, but with current health concerns, I understand.

Someday, I hope to achieve my goal of getting into the business as an announcer or writer. I don't necessarily want to become rich and famous, but I'd like to give these superstars a shoulder to lean on or be there to offer a good ol' pat on the back.

If WWE holds another autograph session in Edmonton, it will again be an honor to meet these wonderful people. The men and women of WWE have become nothing less than my brothers and sisters.

DENISE CARTER
Stony Plain, Alberta

PIPER'S THE PITS

Well, it looks like Roddy Piper is still as hypocritical as ever. His rationale for returning to WWE, despite his public criticism of the company, was very weak. He proved that with a comment that was included in "Before The Bell" in the September issue of *PWI*.

Here's the quote: "[WWE was] doing necrophilia and Grandma's [breasts] were being shown and two guys were getting married. You want me to go on? You got my idea? If you're going to do that [stuff], I ain't interested. But that's all gone all of a sudden. Okay. Then I don't have a problem with it."

Sure, it is true that necrophilia is disgusting. But isn't it just as disgusting to attack an amputee, as he did to Zach Gowen on "Piper's Pit"? What really ticked me off, though, was his comment about gay marriages. Fake gay marriages as publicity stunts are sick, but he shouldn't disrespect people with different lifestyles. It's hard to believe that this is coming from a man who wears a skirt.

MIKE DOBOS
OMAR KHAN
Phishphan032001@yahoo.com

For the record, *PWI* has never had anything against Buff Bagwell. Maybe reader Paul Kerby will believe that after he sees this wonderful photo of Buff ... from his early days as Marcus Bagwell.

MORE BUFF STUFF, PLEASE

I'm a fan of your magazines, but I have one complaint: You obviously have something against Buff Bagwell. Whenever Buff is mentioned, it's in the form of a smart remark. I've met Buff on many occasions, and he has been nice every time. I know a few indy promoters probably don't like him, but what is *PWI's* problem?

Has anyone on your staff ever met Marcus? Or are you just trying to be cool and bash him like the smarks all over the Internet? He has plenty of fans and is still in demand everywhere.

So, how about it? Is there any chance of positive coverage of Buff in your magazines? Why not a "Through The Years" profile at least? You did Terry Funk, and what has he done lately? We want more Buff stuff!

PAUL KERBY
indywrestfan@yahoo.com

MORE "WWE ANNIVERSARY" FEEDBACK

While I enjoyed your commemoration of WWE's 40th anniversary in the Summer 2003 issue of *PWI Presents*, I think you made an error by omitting Shawn Michaels, and Scott Hall (Razor Ramon) from your list of top 10 Intercontinental champions. Michaels used his Intercontinental title reigns as a springboard to the WWF World title. I can also make a strong case for Hall, an active champion who was the first to hold the belt on four occasions.

CHRIS LAUDICINA
Bethesda, MD □

PWI Hotline Extra!

Your answers to our question of the week!

Question of the Week: Should the Raw champion face the Smackdown champion at WrestleMania XX? (September 9 to 15, 2003)

Hotline callers respond: "Having the Raw champion wrestle the Smackdown champion would kill the brand extension, whether it's a non-title match or not," said Jack Falpratt of Charlottesville, Virginia. "It's way too early to cash in on that now."

"The Raw champion should face the Smackdown champion at every WrestleMania," suggested Dominique Wood of Jacksonville, Florida. "That would guarantee a top main event each year, and WrestleMania would really become the Super Bowl of wrestling."

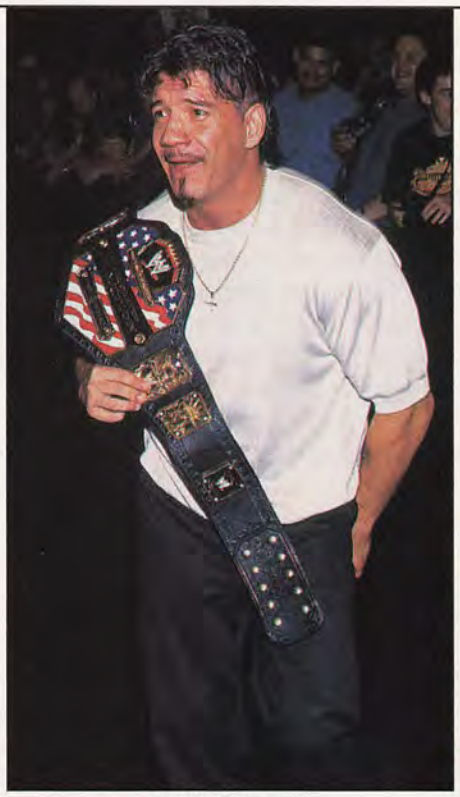
"I've never liked the idea of disputed champions, anyway," said Larry Houston of Santa Barbara, California. "Have a unification match, keep the brand extension, and have the champion defend on both brands, just like before. One world title is more prestigious."

PWI official ratings

For period ended September 21, 2003

TOP 10

1. **BROCK LESNAR**
   295, Minneapolis, MN
   (4) WWE Smackdown champion
2. **BILL GOLDBERG**
   283, Tulsa, OK
   (7) WWE Raw champion
3. **KURT ANGLE**
   233, Pittsburgh, PA
   (1) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title
4. **KENTA KOBASHI**
   282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
   (5) GHC heavyweight champion
5. **TRIPLE-H**
   269, Greenwich, CT
   (3) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title
6. **A.J. STYLES**
   202, Gainesville, GA
   (6) NWA heavyweight champion
7. **TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
   245, Ashikaga, Japan
   (-) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
8. **EDDIE GUERRERO**
   223, El Paso, TX
   (8) WWE U.S. champion
9. **KANE**
   326, St. Louis, MO
   (-) No. 2 contender: WWE Raw title
10. **YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA**
    270, Sapporo, Japan
    (2) IWGP heavyweight champion



Eddie Guerrero

TAG TEAMS

1. **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
   Combined weight: 579 pounds
   (5) WWE Raw tag team champions
2. **EDDIE & CHAVO GUERRERO JR.**
   Combined weight: 408 pounds
   (-) WWE Smackdown tag team champions
3. **SHELTON BENJAMIN & CHARLIE HAAS**
   Combined weight: 510 pounds
   (1) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
4. **HIROSHI TANAHASHI & YUTAKA YOSHIE**
   Combined weight: 484 pounds
   (6) IWGP International tag team champions
5. **RENE DUPREE & SYLVAN GRENIER**
   Combined weight: 504 pounds
   (2) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
6. **SIMON DIAMOND & JOHNNY SWINGER**
   Combined weight: 461 pounds
   (8) NWA tag team champions
7. **TAMON HONDA & KENTA KOBASHI**
   Combined weight: 547 pounds
   (4) GHC tag team champions
8. **BRADSHAW & RON SIMMONS**
   Combined weight: 582 pounds
   (10) No. 2 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
9. **CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM**
   Combined weight: 516 pounds
   (3) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title
10. **MARK HENRY & RODNEY MACK**
    Combined weight: 612 pounds
    (-) No. 2 contenders: WWE Raw tag title

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:
BILL GOLDBERG
(1) 283, Tulsa, OK

1—**TRIPLE-H** *(C) 269, Greenwich, CT*
2—**KANE** *(8) 326, St. Louis, MO*
3—**CHRISTIAN** *(9) 225, Toronto, Ontario*
4—**RANDY ORTON** *(5) 265, St. Louis, MO*
5—**CHRIS JERICHO** *(3) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba*
6—**ROB VAN DAM** *(7) 237, Battle Creek, MI*
7—**TEST** *(-) 282, Toronto, Ontario*
8—**SHAWN MICHAELS** *(6) 217, San Antonio, TX*
9—**SCOTT STEINER** *(10) 275, Detroit, MI*
10—**MAVEN** *(-) 210, Chantilly, VA*

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:
BROCK LESNAR
(1) 295, Minneapolis, MN

1—**KURT ANGLE** *(C) 233, Pittsburgh, PA*
2—**EDDIE GUERRERO** *(2) 223, El Paso, TX*
3—**THE UNDERTAKER** *(5) 304, Dallas, TX*
4—**JOHN CENA** *(3) 260, Los Angeles, CA*
5—**THE BIG SHOW** *(4) 485, Aiken, SC*
6—**REY MISTERIO JR.** *(7) 163, San Diego, CA*
7—**CHRIS BENOIT** *(6) 224, Edmonton, Alberta*
8—**RHYNO** *(8) 275, Detroit, MI*
9—**TAJIRI** *(9) 213, Tokyo, Japan*
10—**A-TRAIN** *(-) 353, Boston, MA*

OVW

OVW Champion:
JOHNNY JETER
(6) 218, San Diego, CA

1—**NICK DINSMORE** *(2) 226, Jefferson, IN*
2—**MATT MORGAN** *(4) 330, Fairfield, CT*
3—**ROB CONWAY** *(1) 240, Pittsburgh, PA*
4—**BIG BAD JOHN** *(7) 320, New Orleans, LA*
5—**MARK HENRY** *(3) 372, Austin, TX*
6—**MARK MAGNUS** *(5) 231, Syracuse, NY*
7—**BANE** *(-) 285, Tombstone, AZ*
8—**TANK TOLAND** *(10) 220, Margate, NJ*
9—**SEVEN** *(-) 278, Memphis, TN*
10—**CHRIS CAGE** *(8) 220, Youngstown, OH*

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:
SAMOA JOE
(C) 270, American Samoa

1—**CHRISTOPHER DANIELS** *(1) 210, Los Angeles, CA*
2—**HOMICIDE** *(2) 220, Brooklyn, NY*
3—**MATT STRYKER** *(6) 220, Cincinnati, OH*
4—**LOW-KI** *(5) 170, Brooklyn, NY*
5—**B.J. WHITMER** *(7) 210, Owensboro, KY*
6—**C.M. PUNK** *(3) 220, Chicago, IL*
7—**A.J. STYLES** *(4) 202, Gainesville, GA*
8—**RAVEN** *(9) 243, Short Hills, NJ*
9—**DANNY MAFF** *(8) 245, Brooklyn, NY*
10—**STEVE CORINO** *(-) 225, Sea Isle City, NJ*

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

ALL STAR WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Loose Cannon; **1**—Austin Lane; **2**—Jimmy Valiant; **3**—Bruiser Graham; **4**—Freezer Thompson; **5**—Doink the Clown; **6**—Luke Graham Jr.; **7**—J.T. West; **8**—Ray Ray; **9**—Midnight Special; **10**—Dirty Little Dave.

BORDER CITY WRESTLING: Champion—D-Lo Brown; **1**—Shane Douglas; **2**—Johnny Swinger; **3**—Chris Sabin; **4**—Eric Young; **5**—Joe E. Legend; **6**—Dyson Pryce; **7**—Kris Chambers; **8**—Alex Shelley; **9**—Petey Williams; **10**—Larry Destiny.

CHAOTIC WRESTLING: Champion—Billy Kryptonite; **1**—Vince Vicallo; **2**—Luis Ortiz; **3**—John Walters; **4**—Arch Kincaid; **5**—Dukes Dalton; **6**—Adam Booker; **7**—Handsome Johnny; **8**—Tim McNeany; **9**—Antonio Thomas; **10**—Matthew Evagrius.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Christopher Daniels; **1**—Prince Nana; **2**—Mike Kruel; **3**—Cheetah Master; **4**—Mr. Ooh La La; **5**—Cyco; **6**—Ace Darling; **7**—Zaquary Springate III; **8**—Japanese Pool Boy; **9**—Mozart Fontaine; **10**—Rob Eckos.

EXODUS WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—George South Sr.; **1**—George South Jr.; **2**—Baddstreet; **3**—Jason Jones; **4**—Ethan Cage; **5**—Chris Hamrick; **6**—Flaming Youth; **7**—Chief Jay Eagle; **8**—Ivan Koloff; **9**—Jimmy Valiant; **10**—Hangman Graham.

INDEPENDENT CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Duke Richards; **1**—Marc Ash; **2**—Dark Starr; **3**—Solitude; **4**—Malachi; **5**—Creeping Death; **6**—Blood Lust; **7**—D.J. P-Roc; **8**—Leo Alure; **9**—Hangtime; **10**—Trailer Park Heat.

INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING CARTEL: Champion—Dennis Gregory; **1**—Sterling James Keenan; **2**—T. Rantula; **3**—Colt Cabana; **4**—A.J. Styles; **5**—Dean Radford; **6**—Jimmy Vegas; **7**—Eric Angle; **8**—B.J. Whitmer; **9**—Jimmy Jacobs; **10**—Alex Shelley.

MIDWEST POWERHOUSE WRESTLING: Champion—Dan Severn; **1**—The Searcher; **2**—Damien Blade; **3**—Bob Orton Jr.; **4**—Christian Haze; **5**—Jason Wells; **6**—Crocodile Kid; **7**—Chico Es Loco; **8**—Agent C; **9**—Agent U; **10**—Marcus Manfield.

NEW AGE WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Jerry Brown; **1**—Gemini; **2**—Jeff Brown; **3**—Khan the Phat Samoan; **4**—Hallowmass Samir; **5**—Chance Romance; **6**—Hallowmass Joseph; **7**—Charlie Cope; **8**—Adam Arson; **9**—Ellis Hagen; **10**—Alligator Man Mauldon.

NWA WILDSIDE: Champion—Hotstuff Hernandez; **1**—Iceberg; **2**—Rainman; **3**—Azrael; **4**—Onyx; **5**—Bull Buchanan; **6**—Caprice Coleman; **7**—Ray Gordy; **8**—Murder One; **9**—Mikal Adryan; **10**—Altar Boy Luke.

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING: Champion—Brad Batten; **1**—Jimmy Golden; **2**—John Noble; **3**—K.C. Thunder; **4**—Tony Givens; **5**—Super Destroyer; **6**—Nightmare; **7**—Justin Sensation; **8**—Ricky Morton; **9**—Shawn Spencer; **10**—Josh Cody.

SUPREME CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Koko B. Ware; **1**—Brandon Hunter; **2**—Billy Maverick; **3**—Eric Draven; **4**—Mason the Mangler; **5**—Todd Morton; **6**—Tello Ozeata; **7**—Joey Moore; **8**—Roger Blade; **9**—John York; **10**—Adrian Scott.

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NWA Champion:
A.J. STYLES
(C) 202, Gainesville, GA

1—RAVEN
(4) 243, Short Hills, NJ
2—HOTSTUFF HERNANDEZ
(3) 280, Houston, TX
3—JEFF JARRETT
(2) 230, Nashville, TN
4—D-LO BROWN
(1) 281, Chicago, IL
5—RICKY MURDOCH
(5) 261, Houston, TX
6—MICHAEL SHANE
(–) 221, San Antonio, TX
7—STEVE CORINO
(8) 219, Sea Isle City, NJ
8—NAOYA OGAWA
(–) 286, Tokyo, Japan
9—BRIAN JEWEL
(6) 265, Shediac, New Brunswick
10—JOHNNY MOSS
(7) 240, Egremont, England

NWA-TNA

NWA Champion:
A.J. STYLES
(C) 202, Gainesville, GA

1—MICHAEL SHANE
(10) 221, San Antonio, TX
2—RAVEN
(4) 243, Short Hills, NJ
3—D-LO BROWN
(1) 281, Chicago, IL
4—JERRY LYNN
(7) 216, Minneapolis, MN
5—JEFF JARRETT
(3) 230, Nashville, TN
6—CHRIS SABIN
(2) 207, Hell, MI
7—SHANE DOUGLAS
(–) 255, Pittsburgh, PA
8—SONNY SIAKI
(–) 236, Miami, FL
9—FRANKIE KAZARIAN
(5) 220, Yucca Valley, CA
10—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(9) 210, Los Angeles, CA

JAPAN

1—KENTA KOBASHI
(2) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
2—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(–) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
3—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(1) 270, Sapporo, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
4—MASA CHONO
(8) 235, Tokyo, Japan
5—KEIJI MUTO
(7) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
6—YUJI NAGATA
(6) 228, Tokyo, Japan
7—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(–) 270, Tokyo, Japan
8—KENDO KA SHIN
(–) 195, Tokyo, Japan
9—TIGER MASK IV
(5) 170, Uruyasu, Japan
10—MITSUHARU MISAWA
(9) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

MEXICO

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(1) 185, Cualtitlan, Mexico
2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(–) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
3—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(–) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
4—SHOCKER
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5—HECTOR GARZA
(2) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
6—DR. WAGNER JR.
(7) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
7—PIERROTH JR.
(–) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico
8—TARZAN BOY
(–) 218, Mexico City, Mexico
9—LA PARKA
(9) 235, Torreon, Mexico
10—BLACK TIGER
(6) 193, Mexico City, Mexico

ratings analysis

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important–and respected–ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

Changes at the top! Both WWE brands have changed champions since ratings were compiled for the last issue of *PWI*. But heck, you probably already realized that. **Kurt Angle** and **Brock Lesnar** might trade the Smackdown title back and forth a dozen or more times if they continue to be matched up against each other (which they probably won't) for the next six months. So it was no big surprise that Lesnar won their "Ironman" match, five falls to four, on September 16. It was just a tad surprising that **Vince McMahon** didn't interfere.

The title change in the main event of Unforgiven was, however, a bit more intriguing. More than a few insiders believe **Bill Goldberg's** march to the Raw title should have been a much shorter one, that WWE has dropped the ball in its handling of "Da Man." But now we are at least getting the opportunity to see what Goldberg can do as the standard-bearer of the Raw brand. Yet the word going around WWE right after Unforgiven was that **Triple-H** would get his rematch with Goldberg for the Raw championship at Survivor Series.

Bill Goldberg

Since "The Game" can rightfully claim that his groin injury prevented him from wrestling at 100 percent effectiveness at Unforgiven, the expected Survivor Series rematch will be very telling. If Triple-H wins that decisively and, as **Liz Hunter** predicts in her "Steel Cage" column on page 62, moves on to a feud with **Randy Orton**, we'll have a good idea of where Goldberg stands with WWE. If he drops down into a mid-card feud, it will probably be safe to assume that Vince McMahon and company have deemed their Goldberg project a failure.

Remember, Goldberg only agreed to a one-year deal with WWE last spring, which means his contract runs out right around the time of WrestleMania XX. He's not the kind of wrestler who would fit well in a supporting role. And considering he didn't come cheap to WWE, can you imagine Vinnie Mac sitting down with him and trying to convince him to sign a new contract that pays him *less* money and requires him to work *more* dates in a *less* prominent role? Neither can we.

For now, though, Goldberg gets the number-two spot in our Top 10, edged out only by Lesnar.

Secondary gold. Less than a half-year has passed since WWE made the decision to give mid-carders on the rosters of both brands titles to pursue, and reinstated the Intercontinental and U.S. championships. Somewhat surprisingly, however, it is the U.S. title, a championship that has its roots in the NWA and WCW, and not the Intercontinental title that is getting the stronger push.

That wasn't necessarily part of the master plan, of course. The reactivated Intercontinental title looked like it would be a powerful vehicle for **Booker T**. If all went right once Booker won the I-C belt (which he did), he could position himself for another shot at the Raw title. Or so a lot of people thought.

Booker T

Back injuries to Booker forced a change of plans there. **Christian** picked up a fairly easy win over the ailing Booker on a house show in August to capture the I-C belt. Although Christian has done a respectable job as champion, WWE didn't do much to elevate the title after he captured it. Many of his title defenses came against **Spike Dudley** and **Val Venis**. As he loves to point out, he was left off the SummerSlam card, and he didn't have a match set for Unforgiven until Raw co-GM **Steve Austin** hastily put together a three-way involving him, **Rob Van Dam**, and **Chris Jericho** six days before the PPV.

Meanwhile, reigning U.S. (and Smackdown tag team) champion **Eddie Guerrero** was arguably the hottest wrestler in WWE at press time. **Chris Benoit**, **Rhyno**, **Tajiri**, and **John Cena** were all making bids for his belt. He was anything but an afterthought in his brand. In fact, many are wondering when exactly Guerrero will be hanging with the Lesnars, Angles, and **Undertakers** of Smackdown.

For this reason, the U.S. champ made our Top 10, while the I-C titlist did not. Perhaps the I-C belt will receive a stronger push if RVD, Jericho, or the returning Booker can put together a long reign.

We're finished for now! As always, if you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings or what you see here, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o *PWI*, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

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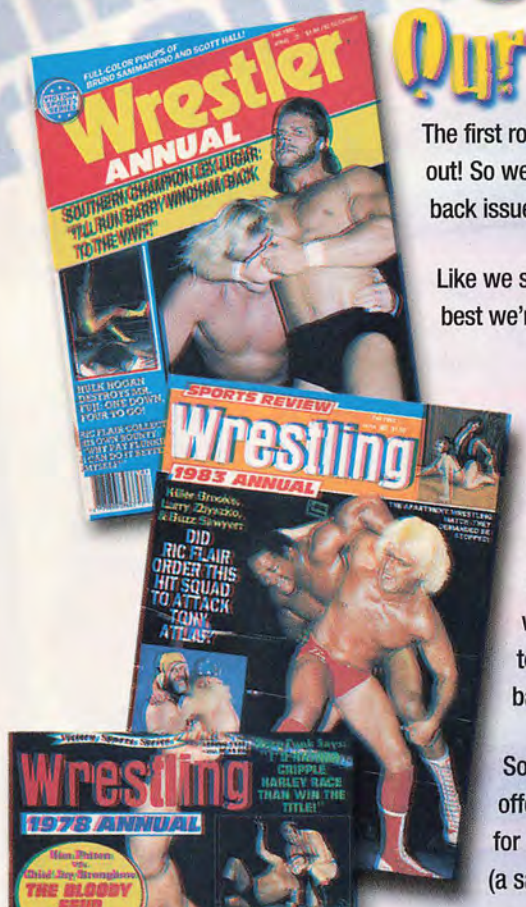

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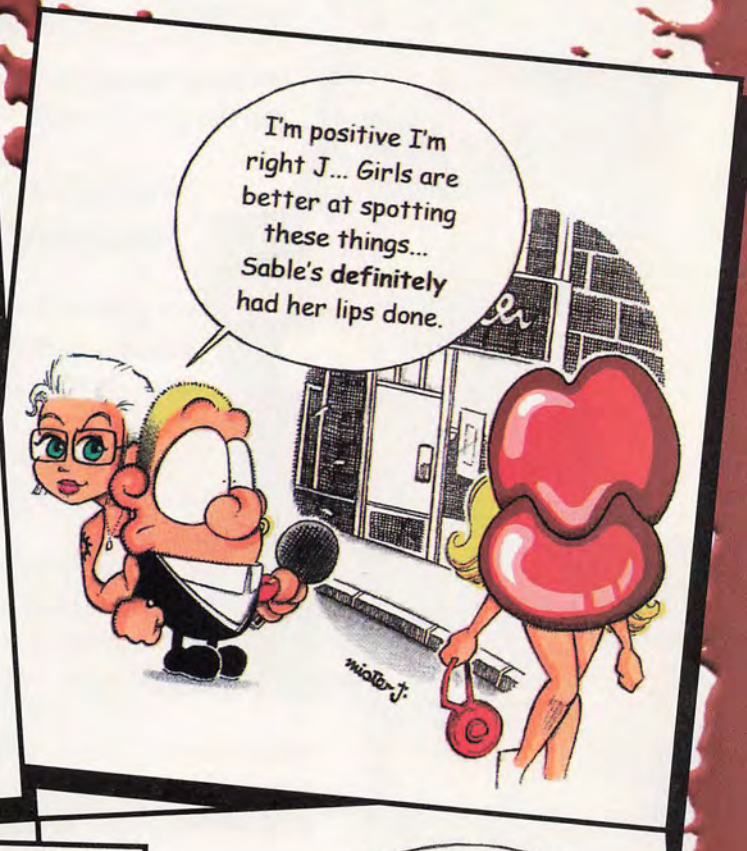
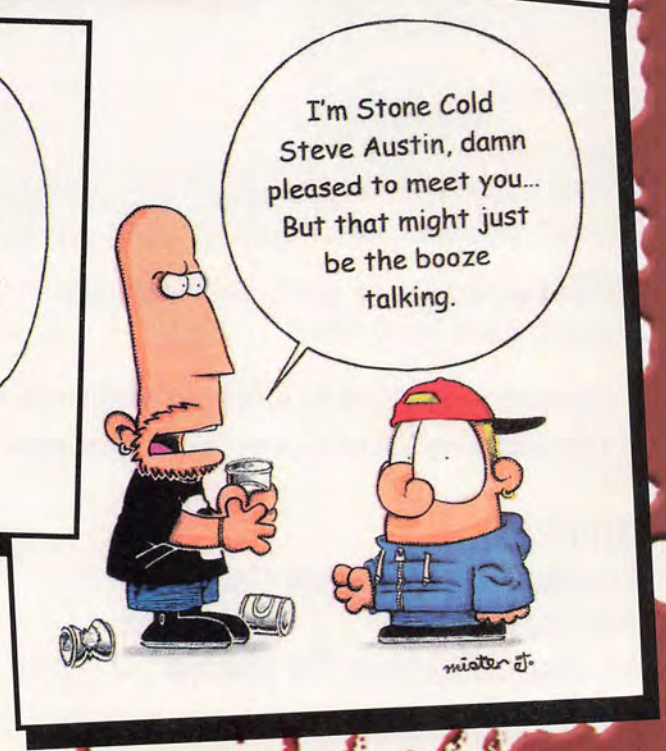
5961/6-02

Drawing Blood

By Jason Conlan

OK, I admit it... It probably was better to stick with the Ultimo Dragon moniker, rather than go with my idea of calling you Frilly-Neck Lizard Man...
mister J.





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Let's just call this one big brotherly mess! Somewhere in this heap of bodies you'll find two Maximo brothers (Joel and Jose, collectively better known as The S.A.T.) and two Briscoe brothers (Mark and Jay, not collectively known as anything but the Briscoes). And since the Briscoes are tied up in both a version of the Walls of Jericho and the Steiner recliner simultaneously, we're guessing it felt a heck of a lot better to be a Maximo at the time this photograph was snapped. The two sets of brothers had an outstanding match on the final Maryland Championship Wrestling card this summer. And the Briscoes somehow got themselves out of this fix to win it.

Photo by Timothy A. Walker

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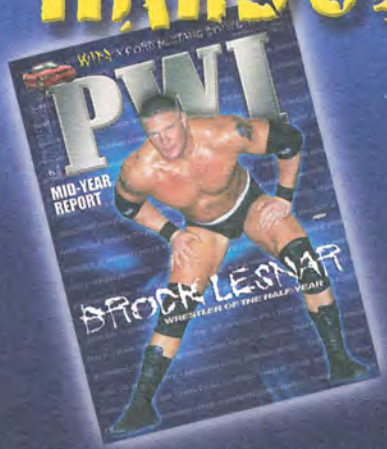

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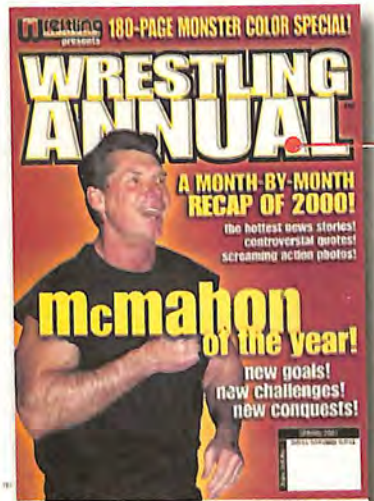

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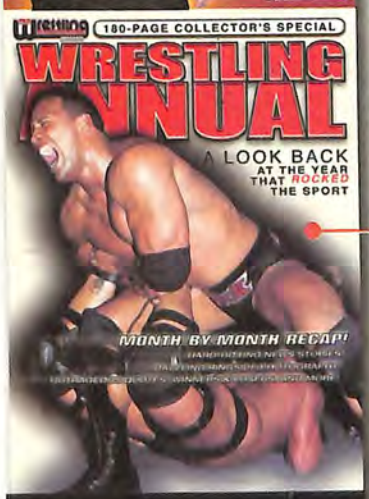

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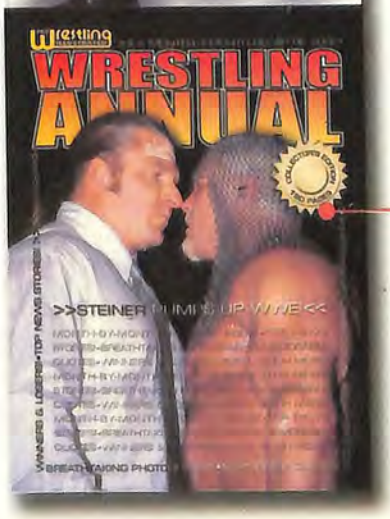

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